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OLD CAMBRIDGE

BY

THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON

AUTHOR OF "TALES OF THE ENCHANTED ISLANDS OF THE ATLANTIC," ETC., ETC.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	OLD CAMBRIDGE	1
II.	OLD CAMBRIDGE IN THREE LITERARY EPOCHS	41
III.	HOLMES	73
IV.	LONGFELLOW	109
V.	LOWELL	145
VI.	INDEX	197

I

OLD CAMBRIDGE

I

OLD CAMBRIDGE

"OLD CAMBRIDGE," as it was formerly called, to distinguish it from the later settlements called East Cambridge and Cambridgeport, is one of the few American towns that may be said to have owed their very name and existence to the pursuits of letters. Laid out originally by Governor John Winthrop as a fortified town, — furnished soon after with a "pallysadoe," of which the large willows on Holmes's Field are the last lingering memorial, — it might nevertheless have gone the way of many abortive early settlements, had it not been for the establishment of Harvard College there. We Cambridge boys early learned, however, that this event was due mainly to the renown attained, as a preacher and author, by the Rev. Thomas Shepard, known in his day as "the holy, heavenly, sweet-affecting, and soul-ravishing Mr. Shepard," a graduate of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, England, who

came to America in 1635. A voluminous author, some of whose works are yet reprinted in England, he was the ruling spirit of the Cambridge synod, which was held in 1637 to pronounce against "antinomian and familistic opinions." He was described by his contemporaries as a "poor, weak, pale-complectioned man," yet such was his power that the synod condemned under his guidance "about eighty opinions, some blasphemous, other erroneous, all unsound," as even the tolerant Winthrop declared. By this and his other good deeds he so won the confidence of the leaders of the colony that when a college was to be founded, Cotton Mather tells us, "Cambridge rather than any other place was fixed upon to be the seat of that happy seminary." On the wrecks of eighty unsound or blasphemous opinions there was thus erected one happy seminary. And the college also brought with it the name of the English university city, so that the settlement first called "Newetowne" became in May, 1638, Cambridge, and has thus ever since remained. And so essentially was the college the centre of the whole colony, as well as of

the town, that there exists among the manuscripts of the Massachusetts Historical Society a memorandum, dated September 30, 1783, to the effect that in the early days the persons appointed to lay out roads into the interior did it only so far as "the bank by Mrs. Biglow's house in Weston," and that this they considered to be quite as far as would ever be necessary, it being "about seven miles from the college in Cambridge."

Fifty years ago, Cambridge boys knew all this tradition very well; and they knew also that the soul-ravishing Mr. Shepard, after publishing a dozen or so of his books in England, printed the last two upon the press which came to Cambridge in the very year when the town assumed its name. We all knew the romance of the early arrival of this press; that the Rev. Joseph Glover, a dissenting minister, had embarked for the colony in 1638 with his wife, his press, his types, and his printer, Stephen Daye; that Mr. Glover died on the passage, but the press arrived safely and was at length put in the house of President Dunster, of Harvard College; that this good man took

into his charge not merely the printing apparatus, but the Widow Glover, whom he finally made his wife. For forty years all the printing done in the British Colonies in America was done on this press, Stephen Daye being followed by his son Matthew, and he by Samuel Green. We know that the first work printed here was "The Freeman's Oath," in 1639; and that about a hundred books were thus printed before 1700, this including Eliot's English Bible. It was not till 1674, nearly forty years later, that a press was set up in Boston; and Thomas in his "History of Printing" says that "the press of Harvard College was, for a time, as celebrated as the press of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in England."

And not merely were the foundations of the town and of the college thus laid in literature, but the early presidents of Harvard were usually selected, not merely for soundness of doctrine, — which was not always their strong point, — but for their scholarship and even supposed literary taste. President Dunster, for instance, was an eminent Oriental scholar and performed also the somewhat dubious service of preparing the

"New England Psalm Book." As originally compiled it had dissatisfied Cotton Mather, who had hoped "that a little more of art was to be employed in it," and good Mr. Shepard thus ventured to criticise its original compilers, the Rev. Richard Mather of Dorchester and the Rev. Messrs. Eliot and Welde of Roxbury:—

> You Roxb'ry poets, keep clear of the crime
> Of missing to give us very good rhyme,
> And you of Dorchester, your verses lengthen
> But with the text's own words you will them strengthen.

Presidents Charles Chauncey and Urian Oakes published a few sermons — the latter offering one with the jubilant title, "The Unconquerable, All Conquering and More than Conquering Soldier," which was appropriately produced on what was then called Artillery Election in 1674. President Increase Mather was one of the most voluminous authors of the Puritan period, and from his time (1701) down to the present day there have been few presidents of Harvard University who were not authors.

All these men we Cambridge children knew, not by their writings, from which we happily

escaped, but from their long-winded Latin inscriptions on the flat stones in the Cambridge cemetery. These we studied and transcribed and, with a good deal of insecurity, translated; indeed, one boy whom I knew well, son of the college librarian, made a book of them all, which is still known to collectors.

Thus we learned of President Charles Chauncey, who died in 1672, that his tomb was the grave of "*praesidis vigilantissimi, viri plane integerrimi, concionatoris eximii, pietate pariter ac liberali eruditione ornatissimi.*" It seemed to us far more impressive than the tenderer tribute to his wife, who died four years before him: —

> Here lies enterr'd wthin this Shrine
> A spirit meeke, a Soule divine,
> Endow'd wth. grace, & piety
> Excelling in humility:
> Preferring Gods commands above
> All fine delights & this World's love.

We used to read also of the Rev. Edward Wigglesworth, S. T. D. (1765), whose virtues took thirty-three lines to inscribe them, and of whom it is recorded that he made his Hebrew lectures not only profitable for teaching, but

delightful to all cultivated minds (*Ad docendum mire accomodatas, literatis item omnibus probatissimas reddiderunt*). He was also, "*Conjux peramans, parens benevolentissimus*"; and it is expressly stated that while he was candid in controversy he was also exceedingly vigorous —"*Simul et acer, nervosus, praepotens extitit.*" If so, it is not strange that Dr. Chauncey in his sketch of him praises his "catholic spirit and conduct, in spite of great temptations to the contrary."

From these we turned to the humbler tomb of Thomas Longhorn, the town drummer, who died in 1685, "aged about 68 years," or of Thomas Fox, whose death was in 1693, and who had a quarter of a century before been ordered by the selectmen to "look to the youth in time of public worship, & to inform against such as he find disorderly"; or, perhaps with vague curiosity to that of "Jane, a negro servant to Andrew Boardman," who died in 1741, when Massachusetts still held slaves.

These larger tombs, by reason of their horizontal position, afforded excellent seats for schoolboys, intent perhaps on exploring the

results of their walnutting or chestnutting; or possibly a defiant nap might be there indulged. I have often wished that I had learned from Lowell on which of them he sat during that Hallowe'en night when he watched there vainly for ghosts.

Only one of these longer epitaphs was in English; and the frequent "*Eheu*," or "*O spes inanis*," in the others, made us feel that emotion as well as accuracy might exist in Latin. Modern cemeteries never seem to me very awe-inspiring; but the old New England graveyards, especially in college towns, impressed on the boyish mind not only the dignity of virtue, but of knowledge; of this world's honors and grandeurs perhaps, but never of its financial treasures. I can find only one epitaph in the Cambridge churchyard which mentions that the person commemorated was a man of wealth; and that is on the grave of a non-collegiate man, whose inscription is in English. But we noticed that at the end of the tombstone of the Rev. Samuel Appleton, after all the sonorous Latin the climax came in those superb words from the English Vulgate: "They that be wise shall shine

as the brightness of the firmament. And they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

I have dwelt upon this churchyard because it is perfectly certain that every Cambridge boy in 1830 drew from it as distinct a sense of an historic past and of the dignity of letters as any English boy receives when he glances downward, while waiting for the Temple Church in London to open its doors, and sees beneath his feet the name of Oliver Goldsmith. Through its influence we naturally thought of the academical virtues — dignity, learning, the power of leadership — as being the great achievement of life, while all else was secondary. On the other hand, the empty diamond-shaped cavities on many of the tombs represented the places where leaden escutcheons had been converted into bullets for the army of the American Revolution. Holmes and Longfellow both described the place in their poems; and it is certain that the Cambridge muses would not have been just what they were without the old churchyard.

Cambridge children also discovered that during the eighteenth century the Harvard pro-

fessors, if not literary men, were at least scholars, according to the standard of their time. Samuel Sewall, grand-nephew of the celebrated judge of that name, first taught the grammar school in Cambridge, and then (1762) became college librarian and instructor in Hebrew. He published a Hebrew grammar, a Latin version of the first book of Young's "Night Thoughts," and various poems and orations in Greek and Latin; and he left behind him a manuscript Chaldee and English dictionary, which still reposes unpublished in the College Library. His kinsman, Jonathan Sewell (not Sewall), born in Cambridge (1766), became an eminent lawyer and legal writer in Canada, was one of the first to propose Canadian federation, in a pamphlet (1815), and left a work on "The Judicial History of France, so far as it relates to the Law of the Province of Lower Canada." The eighteenth century also brought the physical sciences on their conquering course, to Harvard College, displacing the established curriculum of theology and philology; but Professor Goodale has shown that they really came in as a branch of theology, or of what is called "pastoral care," since the

clergy of that day were also largely the medical advisers of their people and had to be instructed for that function. The first Professor of Mathematics and Philosophy, Isaac Greenwood, was not appointed until 1727; he was followed (1738) by John Winthrop, who was greatly in advance of the science of the day, and whose two lectures on comets, delivered in the College Chapel in 1759, are still good reading. The year 1783 saw the founding of the Harvard Medical School; and although this was situated in Boston, the Botanic Garden was in Cambridge and under the supervision (1825–1834) of a highly educated English observer, Thomas Nuttall, whose works on botany and ornithology were pioneers in New England. These books we read, on the very ground which had produced them; and Nuttall's charming accounts of birds, especially, were as if written in our own garden and orchard.

We further discovered that in passing from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century Old Cambridge passed from the domain of a somewhat elementary science to a more than elementary literature. The appointment of John Quincy Adams (1806) as Professor of Rhetoric

and Oratory, had a distinct influence on the literary tendencies of Cambridge, and his two volumes of lectures still surprise the reader by their good sense and judgment. Levi Hedge, about the same time (1810), became Professor of Logic and Metaphysics, and he furnished what was for many years the standard American text-book on the former subject. A few years more brought to Cambridge (between 1811 and 1822) a group of men at that time unequalled in this country as regarded general cultivation and the literary spirit, — Andrews Norton, Edward Everett, Joseph Green Cogswell, George Ticknor, Washington Allston, Jared Sparks, Edward T. Channing, Richard H. Dana, and George Bancroft. Most of them were connected with the University, the rest were resident in Cambridge, but all had their distinct influence on the atmosphere in which the Cambridge authors grew. Professor Edward T. Channing especially —grand-uncle of the present Professor of similar name — probably trained as many conspicuous authors as all other American instructors put together.

It has also an important bearing on the

present volume when we observe that the effect of all this influence was to create not merely individual writers, but literary families. The Rev. Abiel Holmes, D.D., author of "The Annals of America," came to Cambridge as pastor of the First Church in 1809; and both his sons, Oliver Wendell and John, became authors — the one being known to all English readers, while the other, with perhaps greater original powers, was known only to a few neighbors. The Ware family, coming in 1825, was a race of writers, including the two Henrys, John, William, John F. W., and George. Richard Dana, the head of the Boston bar in his day, was a native of Cambridge (1699); as was his son Francis Dana, equally eminent and followed in lineal succession by Richard Henry Dana, the poet; and by his son of the same name, author of "Two Years before the Mast." The Channing family, closely connected with the Danas, was successively represented in Cambridge by Professor E. T. Channing, the Rev. W. H. Channing, and Professor Edward Channing. With them must be associated Washington Allston, whose prose and verse were as remarkable as

his paintings, and whose first wife was a Channing, and whose second wife a Dana. Rev. Charles Lowell came to live in Cambridge in 1819, and he and his children, the Rev. R. T. S. Lowell, James Russell Lowell, and Mrs. S. R. Putnam, were all authors. Judge Joseph Story, the most eminent legal writer whom America has produced, resided for many years in Cambridge (1829–1845), as did his son, William Wetmore Story, author and sculptor, and his son-in-law, George Ticknor Curtis, legal writer and historian. Benjamin Peirce, who was college librarian (1826–1831), was father of the celebrated mathematician of that name; and his two grandchildren, James Mills Peirce and Charles Sanders Peirce, have followed with distinction in the same path. The Rev. John G. Palfrey, the historian of New England, bequeathed similar tastes to his children, both of his sons having contributed to military history, while his oldest daughter has written both poetry and fiction under the name of "E. Foxton." Professor Charles Eliot Norton, in the same way, has prolonged and enhanced the literary eminence of his name, as did Professor

F. H. Hedge and Tutor William Everett. Other instances of literary families — more, perhaps, than any other place in America has produced — might be added to these; but these are enough to show how a literary atmosphere was produced by which the young people of Cambridge were inevitably moulded. The passage into literature seemed an easy thing when so many of one's elders had already accomplished it, each in his own fashion.

To these influences may well be added that of a group of cultivated foreigners, escaped from revolutions or prisons in Germany and Italy, and finding at last (from 1826 onward) a foothold in Harvard University. Such were Charles Follen, Charles Beck, Pietro Bachi; and to these must be added (1816) that delightful and sunny representative of Southern France, that living Gil Blas in hair-powder and pigtail, Francis Sales. To these was later joined (1847) the attractive and inspiring Louis Agassiz. There were also in Cambridge several private libraries which were, for their period, remarkable; as that of Professor Convers Francis, rich in theology and in general

literature; that of George Livermore, devoted especially to Bibles and Biblical literature; and that of Thomas Dowse, a leather-dresser in Cambridgeport, whose remarkable historical collections were bequeathed to the Massachusetts Historical Society. At a time when the Harvard Library held but forty thousand books, these collections had a relative importance which they would not now possess. They were enough to make Cambridge overbalance Boston, in its library opportunities, whereas for music and the plastic arts Cambridge had then as now to seek Boston; and at that day would have been more liable even than Boston to the criticism made by a brilliant New York woman, upon the latter city, some thirty years ago, that it was a place where music, painting, and sculpture "seemed to be regarded simply as branches of literature"; in other words, people knew more of the biographies of artists than of their works.

We boys knew the early traditions of Cambridge: of the famous hunt which brought in seventy-six wolves' heads as late as 1696, and the hunts which yielded many bears annually down

to the time of the Revolution. We knew the tradition of Andrew Belcher's stately funeral in 1717, when ninety-six pairs of mourning gloves were issued and fifty suits of mourning clothes were made for guests at the cost of the estate. We knew the place where two negroes were legally put to death in 1755 for the crime of petty treason in murdering their master, the one being hanged, the other burned to death. We knew that two of the regicides took refuge in Cambridge after the death of Charles I., and it was preserved in our memories through a curious oath "By Goffe-Whalley" then extant among Cambridge boys, but now vanished. We knew the spot where stood the oak tree, on the north side of the common, where the Rev. John Wilson, first minister of Boston and a portly man, climbed the tree on Election Day, in 1637, and exhorted the people to vote for Governor Winthrop and not for Harry Vane. We read in a book by a Cambridge woman, Mrs. Hannah Winthrop, "the horrors of that midnight cry," as she calls it, when all the women and children of Cambridge were awakened by drums and bells on

the night before the battle of Lexington; when they were bidden to take refuge at Fresh Pond, away from the redcoats' line of march, and when, after the watchful night was over, they went on foot to Andover, passing the dead bodies that lay in what is now Arlington.

It must be remembered that the Cambridge of sixty years ago was not merely that number of years nearer to the great Revolution which made us a nation, but was especially full of its associations. In the old First Church, where Dane Hall now stands, — the present church having been built in 1833, — the First Provincial Congress met, which was presided over by John Hancock, from October 17 to December 10, 1774. Here the Committee of Safety met, November 2, and here, on February 1, 1775, the Second Provincial Congress was convened, adjourning to Concord on the 17th. In Christ Church (built in 1761) the company of Captain John Chester was quartered, after the battle of Lexington, and a bullet mark in the porch still recalls that period. The only member of the church who took the colonial side was appointed commissary general to the

forces; the rest fleeing to General Gage in Boston. All these things were traditional among Cambridge boys; we knew the spot where the troops had been drawn up, opposite Dr. Holmes's "Old Manse," while President Langdon offered prayer, ere he dismissed them to their march toward Bunker Hill. We all knew the spot where Washington took command of the army; and the house (the Craigie House) where he dwelt. We played the battle of Bunker Hill on the grass-grown redoubts built during the siege of Boston. Only one of these is left, the three-gun battery known as Fort Washington, but there was a finer one on Putnam Avenue, where greenhouses now stand. More elaborate than any were those around the ruins of the convent on Mount Benedict in Somerville; they encircled the hill and could accommodate a regiment of schoolboys. Moreover, there still lingered one or two wounded veterans whom we eyed with reverence, chief of whom was Lowell's "Old Joe":—

> Old Joe is gone, who saw hot Percy goad
> His slow artillery up the Concord road—

A tale which grew in wonder, year by year,
As, every time he told it, Joe drew near
To the main fight, till, faded and grown gray,
The original scene to bolder tints gave way:
Then Joe had heard the foe's scared double-quick
Beat on stove-drum with one uncaptured stick,
And, ere death came the lengthening tale to lop,
Himself had fired and seen a redcoat drop.
Had Joe lived long enough, that scrambling fight
Had squared more nearly to his sense of right,
And vanquished Percy, to complete the tale,
Had hammered stone for life in Concord jail.

There were still those in Cambridge who could recall the American Revolution and whose sons enacted the surrender of Cornwallis at every country muster. The houses of Tory Row still stood in isolated dignity, some of them suspected, like the two Vassall Houses, of being connected by secret underground passages which none could find, or else surrounded with quaint walls and fishponds and "topiary work" of carved yew trees, as at the Brattle House, now converted into the Social Union. I myself used to play among these trees with Margaret Fuller's younger brothers. Not far off was the house of the elder Professor Hedge, previously occupied by his father-in-law, Dr.

Kneeland, who, being suspected as a Tory, had his house protected by red-coated sentries, for whom his little daughter imbibed such reverence that long after the British evacuation she never passed a deserted and battered sentry-box without dropping a courtesy in salutation.

In short, the British lion was to Cambridge boys of that day but a dethroned deity, who might again be restored should such boys relax for a moment their defiance to tyrants. Then there was "the constant service of the antique world" in the direction of costume. Mr. Sales, the Franco-Spanish teacher, who lived till 1854, had cue and hair powder; Dr. Popkin, who died in 1852, wore the last of the cocked hats, which, with his umbrella, is carefully preserved in the Cambridge Public Library. This implement was one of the three eminent umbrellas which dignified the university town; vast and heavy structures, equally hard to spread or furl; the second belonged to William Jennison, tax-collector, and the other to Professor Hedge, this being commemorated in Holmes's letters as held by the hands of his son Dunham, "An

old-fashioned republican-looking one, such as Dunham used to carry his aunt home with."[1]

These and many other traditions were a part of the education of Cambridge boys three-quarters of a century ago; on such traditions Holmes and Lowell were nurtured, and it was into an atmosphere full of such that Longfellow entered when he removed to Cambridge. It may be called provincial, certainly, but it was such a provincialism as that of the heronry of which we were proud, in the deep swamps called the Fresh Pond marshes, where successive broods of birds were hatched, varying in length of wing or power of flight, but agreeing in this, that all flew from it at morning and winged their way back to it as evening drew on.

Add to all this that Cambridge, like other college towns in America, was a place of simple habits, where wealth counted for little and intellect for a great deal; indeed, wealth counts for comparatively little in Cambridge to this day. When a boy, hearing complaint made of the low salaries paid to all professors, — then about $1000, — I asked why they remained in

[1] Holmes's "Life and Letters," I. p. 127.

office, and was told by my elder brother that these instructors were considered to be partly paid in honor — this being certainly a high lesson to impress on schoolboys.

It must finally be remembered that an essential part of the atmosphere of Old Cambridge was what may be called the habit of precocity on the intellectual side. The period described was one of infant schools, — institutions quite unlike the modern kindergarten, — and the forcing process was applied very early, so as insensibly to modify us all. Margaret Fuller began to study Latin at the age of six, and recited to her father after he had come back from his lawyer's office, being often kept up for the purpose until late in the evening. The Rev. Dr. Hedge, afterwards so intimately associated with her, assured me that there was nothing remarkable about this process of forcing except that it was applied to a girl; all the professors' sons, he said, were educated in the same way. He himself was fitted for college at eleven, and had read at least half of the whole body of Latin literature before that time. I have given elsewhere a letter I once received from a little girl

of my acquaintance, the daughter of a professor, a letter written by her own hand, congratulating me on being six years old and boasting that she should be four in three months. When we read in Lowell's letters of his poring over French stories at seven and of his mother's giving him the three volumes of Scott's "Tales of a Grandfather" at nine, we must bear in mind this habitual precocity of the period. That it was physically disastrous to Margaret Fuller we know from her own statements; but that it did any visible injury to the Cambridge men of her generation I am unable to say. Certain it is that Holmes, Lowell, Story, and Hedge retained into age — except for the last few years of the latter's life — a wonderful share of the vivacity and freshness of youth — the very qualities which precocious training is thought by many to impair.

The people among whom the Cambridge authors were born or lived were thus a race of simple, well-meaning, studious, and even cultivated persons, having the advantages and limitations of a college town, not yet a university city. When we judge the Cambridge academic

life of that day by the present standard of an English university, we of course commit great injustice; we can only compare it with the corresponding English conditions of the same period; and these had, as the accomplished Edward Everett, fresh from German universities, had written, absolutely no advantage over the American Cambridge. He wrote to my father from Oxford (June 6, 1818): "There is more teaching and more learning in our American Cambridge than there is in both the English universities together, tho' between them they have four times our number of students."[1] Yet he had, with Cogswell and Ticknor, written letter after letter to show the immeasurable superiority of Göttingen to the little American institution; and his low estimate of the English universities as they were in 1818 is confirmed by those who teach in them to-day.

It is fair to say that, provincial as the Cambridge of sixty years ago may have been, it offered at least a somewhat refined provincialism, with the good manners and respectable attainments prevailing at that time. Nothing is

[1] *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, September, 1897, p. 16.

more curious than the impression held by some of Lowell's English friends — even, it is said, that most intimate friend to whom his letters are dedicated by Mr. Norton — that the "Hosea Biglow" dialect was that of Lowell's father, family, and personal circle. All who know anything of the period know that the speech of educated families in New England at that time resembled essentially — perhaps more closely than now — the dialect of corresponding families in England. There had been less time than now for differences of climate and social habit to develop different intonations and pronunciations. The speech of Hosea Biglow was the speech, on the other hand, not of peasants, — for there was no such class, — but of New England farmers, and consequently of their sons who came to the neighborhood of cities to do farmwork and get on in life. The Irish invasion had then scarcely begun, and the "hired man" of the Cambridge household was usually a country boy — half servant and half equal — who took care of the horse and did the chores. As a rule, he was little educated, — for the modern public school system was hardly inaugurated, — but he had plenty

of sense and energy; and his descendants now often occupy high social positions, very likely employing in some capacity the descendants of those who paid wages to their progenitors. Even at that time, the "hired men" held their own at the town meeting and in the muster field; and President Quincy, the dignified head of the college, was only major in the militia regiment of which his man-servant was colonel. It was at this period and under these conditions that the "Biglow Papers" were written. The dialect of Lowell's father and his mates, on the other hand, was only too scholastic and academic; he who doubts this has merely to consult the early volumes of the *North American Review.*

It was perhaps fortunate, on the whole, as being an essential part of the broader training of Cambridge authors, that the population and traditions of the town were not wholly Puritanic, or rather that it included some representative of that gypsy-like element which has here and there cropped out, in a repressed minority, — a sort of submerged stratum, — in New England ever since the days of Morton of Merry Mount. It has

found but two recognized autobiographers, — Stephen Burroughs and Henry Tufts; but it made itself manifest on every Commencement Day at Cambridge and at every "Cornwallis" — a form of military muster — on Waltham Plain. John Holmes, who always got closer to the heart of the community than any one else, thus depicted some of its elements in Cambridge through a magazine called *The Writer:* —

"Old Cambridge in Mr. Lowell's youth was little more than a village; indeed, the expression, 'down to the village,' was in use. The old Puritan industry and thrift prevailed; but there were those who were not content with life in water colors, but demanded a stronger liquid to produce the desired tints, and chose the path of pleasure rather than that of thrift. They did some desultory work, in deference to necessity, but their best efforts were given to the small game on the marshes. The exertion necessary in this pursuit, they could endure, it being free from any taint of regular industry. But angling, sedentary and contemplative, was their preference. To throw the line into the dark eddies

by the Brighton Bridge, and at ease to await the fish who was to outrun the largest dimensions offered by tradition, was complete happiness. Mr. Lowell viewed these exceptional beings with the eye of a humorist, rather than of the moralist. As a spectator, he appreciated the irregular light which they threw on the monotonous path of steady industry."

There is abundant evidence in Lowell's letters and in his printed works of his humorous enjoyment of this under-side of human nature. It was after his final return from England that he had an appeal, on the day before one Fourth of July, from a broken-down companion of his boyhood who had led a somewhat questionable life, to go down to East Cambridge jail and release another similar worthy, also a playmate, that he might at least spend Independence Day in freedom. Lowell went promptly and paid the fine, which was very likely assessed over again, and for adequate cause, within forty-eight hours. The element of sailor vagrancy, too, was then far more prominent than now. The East India trade was still a lingering Boston enterprise.

Cambridge boys were still sent to sea as a cure for naughtiness, or later as supercargoes, this being a mark of confidence. Groups of sailors sometimes strayed through Cambridge, and there were aromatic smells among the Boston wharves. Lowell in particular had a naval uncle, and he wrote of what had been told from childhood when he said in "The Growth of the Legend":—

> The sailors' night watches are thrilled to the core
> With the lineal offspring of Odin and Thor.

In two respects the group of Cambridge authors had gained from their restricted life certain qualities which some might call *bourgeois*, and many others admirable. They were all honest men pecuniarily; they habitually paid their debts and lived within their means. Neither in Holmes nor Lowell nor in Longfellow was there anything of that quality of thriftlessness so dear to lovers of the picturesque, but so exasperating to market-men and other base creatures. If the Cambridge men were not "great wits," they were not "to madness near allied" in this respect, nor did they drive cred-

itors to madness. Longfellow regards with amused interest the discovery that N. P. Willis, in 1840, had earned by his pen annually ten thousand dollars, while Longfellow himself says, "I wish I had made ten hundred;" but it did not inspire him with the wish to do Willis's work of gossip, only with a desire to keep his own method. Lowell was never rich, nor was Holmes, but they lived within their means. Even Longfellow's salary in 1834 was but fifteen hundred dollars, although in later life his income became ample. There was nothing pharisaical in this moderation, nor did either of these poets deal harshly with persons of the Harold Skimpole race who hovered around them, as about all those who have incurred the imputation of success in their trade, whatever it be. Any lack of interest pertaining to the names of Cambridge bards for this reason must be endured; there have been many persons in our literature to whom no such despicable habits of abstinence belonged, and who found a loftier philosophy in Pistol's "Base is the slave that pays."

And the other point which seems noticeable

is that while they were ready to accept fame and prosperity as they came, they did not copy the tricks of politicians, pulling their own wires, lauding their own achievements, asking puffs from others, and exhibiting themselves in attitudes. There was also in their immediate circle the heartiest mutual regard and not a trace of jealousy. They may have been called a Mutual Admiration Society, but this was incomparably better than to belong to one of those societies for Mutual Defamation which literary history has much oftener seen. Even Concord, in spite of its soothing name, did not always exhibit among its literary men that relation of unbroken harmony which marked the three most eminent of those here classed as Cambridge authors. It is well known that Emerson distrusted the sombre tone of Hawthorne's writings and advised young people not to read them; and that Judge Hoar, Emerson's inseparable friend, could conceive of no reason why any one should wish to see Thoreau's Journals published. Among the Knickerbocker circles in New York it seems to have been still worse.

Cooper the novelist, says Parke Godwin, always brought "a breeze of quarrel with him." Cooper wrote thus to Rufus W. Griswold (August 7, 1842): "A published eulogy of myself from Irving's pen could not change my opinion of his career. . . . Cuvier has the same faults as Irving, and so had Scott. They were all meannesses, and I confess I can sooner pardon crimes, if they are manly ones. I have never had any quarrel with Mr. Irving, and give him full credit as a writer. Still I believe him to be below the ordinary level, in moral qualities, instead of being above them, as he is cried up to be." He adds: "Bryant is worth forty Irvings in every point of view, but he runs a little into the seemly (?) school."[1] Whipple writes to Griswold six years later: "I have no patience with the New York literati. They are all the time quarrelling with each other. Why not kiss and be friends?"[2] No such letter could ever have been written about the three most eminent Cambridge authors, nor could any-

[1] "Letters of R. W. Griswold," pp. 144, 145.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 233.

thing be more simple, delightful, and free from clouds than the whole intercourse between Holmes, Lowell, and Longfellow. To those outside their own circle, and especially to Margaret Fuller, this cordiality did not always extend, but it is to be noted that as she permanently removed from Cambridge, her birthplace, in 1833, before Lowell had even entered college and before Longfellow had become a Harvard professor, she formed no part of the local group. The conservative Holmes, who had been a schoolmate of hers, rather sympathized with Lowell's attack upon her;[1] but when she criticised Longfellow in the New York *Tribune*, the latter only mentions it in his journal as "what might be called a bilious attack," and on hearing the news of her death he writes: "What a calamity! A singular woman for New England to produce; original and somewhat self-willed, but full of talent and full of work. A tragic end to a somewhat troubled and romantic life." It would indeed have been difficult, perhaps, for mutual jealousy

[1] Lowell's "Letters," II. pp. 26, 173. Compare Holmes's "Life and Letters," II. p. 108.

or envy to exist in any literary circle of which Longfellow was the centre; and the centre of the Cambridge circle, so far as the little town itself was concerned, he surely was.

Professor Norton has left on record the perfect frankness with which Lowell and himself criticised the final revision of Longfellow's Dante, "with a freedom that was made perfect" by the absolute modesty of the author.[1] As between Holmes and Lowell, those who think that mutual admiration went too far, and became flattery, would do well to read and digest the letters of Holmes to Lowell as published in the "Life and Letters"[2] of the former, and see how utterly frank was their intercourse from the beginning, and how keenly Holmes recognized, for instance, the weak points not merely of the "Fable for Critics," but of the "Vision of Sir Launfal." No contemporary critic, perhaps, insisted with such fearless justice on the incongruities which form the very basis of that otherwise charming work — "the picture part of the poem" being "Yankee in its

[1] Longfellow's "Life," by his brother, II. p. 429.
[2] Holmes's "Life and Letters," II. pp. 107, 138.

effect," as Holmes says, with the dandelion and the Baltimore oriole "in the tableaux of the old feudal castle." In even the description of June he finds some of these discords and gives absolute praise only to the description of the brook. His criticism on the measure of the poem is only the natural revolt of what he calls the "old square-toed heroic" against the "rattlety-bang sort of verse" which came in with Coleridge's "Christabel." All this was, however, written in 1849, and certainly no finer "appreciation" — in the current phrase — of the man Lowell was ever penned than that which Holmes wrote in 1868: "I cannot help, however, saying how much I am impressed by the lusty manhood of your nature as shown in the heroic vigor of your verse; by the reach and compass of your thought; by the affluence, the felicity, and the subtilty of your illustrations, which weave with the thoughts they belong to as golden threads through the tissue of which they form part; and perhaps most of all by that *humanity* in its larger sense, which belongs to you beyond any of those with whom your name is often joined. While I have been reading these grave and noble poems I

have forgotten that you were a wit and a humorist, — that you were a critic and an essayist, to say nothing of your being a scholar such as we breed, if at all, only as the phœnix is bred."[1]

Such was the generosity of tone, such the frankness of intercourse, that prevailed in the little circle of Cambridge authors half a century ago.

[1] Holmes's "Life and Letters," II. p. 111.

II

OLD CAMBRIDGE IN THREE LITERARY EPOCHS

II

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THE literary epochs of New England may be said to have been three: the first issue of the *North American Review* (1815), that of the *Dial* (1840), and that of the *Atlantic Monthly* (1857). During each of these epochs a peculiarly important part was taken by Cambridge men.

1. *The North American Review*

The *North American Review*, though preceded in Boston by the short-lived *Massachusetts Magazine* and the *Monthly Anthology*, yet achieved an influence and a prominence which these did not reach, and is still issued, though in another city and in another form. Of the "Anthology Club" of Boston, Josiah Quincy said — knowing intimately most of the members: — "Its labors may be considered as a true revival of polite learning in this country, after that

decay and neglect which resulted from the distractions of the Revolutionary War, and as forming an epoch in the intellectual history of the United States." This epoch may, however, be better indicated by the foundation of the *North American Review*, which immediately followed. This periodical, during far the larger part of its early career, was under the editorship of Cambridge men. After the first editor, William Tudor, there came a long line of Cambridge successors — Willard Phillips, Edward Tyrrel Channing, Edward Everett, Jared Sparks, John Gorham Palfrey, Francis Bowen, and, after some interval, James Russell Lowell and Charles Eliot Norton. The list of chief contributors to the first forty volumes of the *Review*, as appears from the Index published in 1878, would include, in addition to those already given, C. C. Felton, George Bancroft, H. W. Longfellow, and the elder Norton — all Harvard instructors. Its connection with Cambridge was therefore well defined and unquestionable.

Judge Story, then head of the Harvard Law School, who had for many years a higher foreign reputation than any other American

author, thus wrote in 1819 to Sir William Scott: "So great is the call for talents of all sorts in the active use of professional and other business in America, that few of our ablest men have leisure to devote exclusively to literature or the fine arts, or to composition on abstract science. This obvious reason . . . will explain why we have few professional authors and those not among our ablest men." He then speaks of a "review published in Boston," and says: "The review is edited by gentlemen young in life, engaged in active business, and who have scarcely a moment of leisure to devote to these pursuits. The latter, too, is voluntary and without profit to themselves."[1] This referred plainly to the *North American Review*.

The articles which appeared in this *Review* had a wide influence, in their day, on both political and literary opinion. They were written, as a rule, in what may be called the Southey style, which then predominated in the London quarterlies — an orderly and clear-cut style, not wanting in vigor, but essentially academic. The early articles, if they brought

[1] Story's "Life and Letters," I. p. 32.

little profit to their authors, brought sometimes disaster. Bowen, for instance, whose self-willed and somewhat disputative temperament made him many enemies, lost the Professorship of American History in Harvard University through a series of attacks on the Hungarian revolutionists for whom Kossuth had aroused much interest in this country. Bowen's views were strongly contested by a man of uncommon ability, Robert Carter, also of Cambridge, who wrote a series of papers in the *Boston Atlas* (1850) in defence of Kossuth and his party; and these papers, being reprinted in a pamphlet, were said to have caused the refusal of the Board of Overseers to confirm Bowen's nomination as Professor of History. Three years later, however, he was appointed Alford Professor of Natural Religion, Moral Philosophy, and Civil Polity, a position which he held until his death. He was a man of immense reading, keen mind, and was not without those qualities which Lord Byron thought essential to an historian, — wrath and partiality. For him alone Lowell made an essential change in his "Fable for Critics," leaving out in the revised

edition a pungent delineation of Professor Bowen. This Lowell did on becoming himself a Harvard professor; and if he had done the same, after Margaret Fuller's tragic death, with his personal attack on her, he would have averted much criticism on himself.

Robert Carter, who thus defeated Bowen and was afterwards intimately associated with Lowell in both literature and life, was one of those gifted eccentrics who gravitated to Cambridge in earlier days, perhaps more freely than now. He had known extreme poverty, and used to tell the story of his mother and himself walking the streets of a city in central New York and spending their last half-dollar on a copy of Spenser's "Faerie Queene," instead of a dinner. He was a man of wide reading, great memory, and great inventive power; his favorite work in embryo being a tale which was to occupy twelve volumes each as large as Sue's "Wandering Jew," then widely read. Two of these volumes were to contain an incidental summary of the history of the world, told by a heavenly spirit to a man wandering among the Mountains of the Moon in Africa. He came

to Cambridge under Lowell's patronage and secured a place in the post-office at a salary of two hundred dollars, on which modest income he married a maiden as poor as himself, who brought him as a dowry two eagles, — formidable pets, — whose butcher's bills made great inroads on his pay. With all these peculiarities he was a capital journalist and had much organizing power, the main work of bringing into existence the Free Soil (afterward Republican) party falling upon him. He made, however, no permanent contribution to literature except in a little book so excellently done that it should prove a classic, — "A Summer Cruise on the Coast of New England."

One of the controlling influences in the *North American*, and in all the Cambridge life of that period, was a man whose prominence is now merged in that of a yet more accomplished and eminent son. This was Professor Andrews Norton, admirably described by George Ripley, — the founder of Brook Farm, — who had nevertheless had with him a controversy so vehement that it would have annihilated the mutual appreciation of lesser men. Ripley's characterization is as follows: —

"Mr. Norton may be said to have formed a connecting link between the past and the future in American literary cultivation. He appeared at the moment when the scholastic attainments since the period of the Revolution were about to ripen into a more generous development. In early life he was far in advance of most of his contemporaries in sound and exact learning, and in what was then deemed an excessive freedom of speculation. He was connected with Harvard, first as tutor, then as librarian, and afterward as Professor of Sacred Literature. In each of these offices his influence was marked and salutary. His thorough scholarship served to give form and substance to the literary enthusiasm which at that time prevailed in Cambridge. His refined and exquisite taste cast an air of purity and elegance around the spirit of the place. His habits were as severe as those of a mediæval monk. His love of literature was a passion. The predominant qualities of his mind were clearness of perception, rigidity of judgment, accuracy of expression, and a chaste imagination. His

peculiar sphere was that of theology and criticism, but no department of elegant letters was foreign to his tastes. Every scholar in Cambridge received an inspiring impulse from his example. His sympathies were not easily won, nor was he lavish in the expression of even favorable judgments. He was free, perhaps, from what may be called moral suspicion, but he certainly often evinced an excess of intellectual caution. A man of stainless purity of purpose, of high integrity of life, with a profound sense of religion, and severe simplicity of manners, his example was a perpetual rebuke to the conceitedness of learning, the vanity of youthful scholarship, and the habit of 'vain and shallow thought.' His influence is deeply stamped on the literature of Harvard."

Side by side with the *North American Review* grew up another periodical which, though denominational, was a sort of adjunct to it, — the *Christian Examiner*, established in 1824. It was first edited by Rev. John G. Palfrey, D.D., of Cambridge, and afterwards for a long time by the Rev. William Ware

of Cambridge, better known by his historical romances "Zenobia" and "Probus." These tales had long a high reputation, and reprints of them still appear in England. The *Christian Examiner* existed for forty-five years, and although for many years it paid nothing to contributors, it yet rendered distinct literary service, whatever may be thought of its theology. Nor must be forgotten another important annual publication always edited in Cambridge, — *The American Almanac.* Its main founder was another of those eccentric characters of whom the university town was then prolific. Among the various academic guests who used to gather in my mother's hospitable parlor on Sunday evenings, no figure is more vivid in my memory than one whom Lowell in his "Fireside Travels" has omitted to sketch. This was Dr. Joseph E. Worcester, whose "Elements of History, Ancient and Modern," I had faithfully studied at school; and who was wont to sit silent, literally by the hour, a slumbering volcano of facts and statistics, while others talked. He was tall, stiff, gentle, and benignant, wearing blue spec-

tacles, and with his head as it were ingulfed in the high coat collar of other days. He rocked to and fro, placidly listening to what was said, and might perhaps have been suspected of a gentle slumber, when the casual mention of some city in the West, then dimly known, would rouse him to action. He would then cease rocking, would lean forward, and say in his peaceful voice: "Chillicothe? What is the present population of Chillicothe?" or, "Columbus? What is the population of Columbus?" and then, putting away the item in some appropriate pigeon-hole of his vast memory, would relapse into his rocking-chair once more. These various periodicals, with their editors, gave to Cambridge the constant attitude of dawning knowledge, of incipient literature, which, indeed, properly belongs to a college town. It is to be observed that all new university centres, as Baltimore or Chicago, thus now signalize their arrival through the creation of new periodicals by the dozen.

The *North American Review* existed at a time when the "Four Reviews," as they were called, were still the foundation of all American

thought, and when sets of the "Modern British Essayists" had taken the place in young men's libraries of the "British Essayists" of Addison's period. The result was a well-bred, clearly written, somewhat prosaic style common to both nations, but practically brought to an end by Carlyle with his impetuous vigor and by what Holmes called "the Macaulay-flowers" of literature. These influences in England, with the rise of Emerson and Parker in America, brought a distinct change, and Lowell eminently contributed his share when Professor Bowen, editing the *North American*, complained of his articles as being "too brilliant." Since that day authors have been allowed to be as brilliant as they can, in all periodicals, although they have not uniformly availed themselves of this privilege.

2. *The Dial*

Whatever may be said, in the light of changing schools of philosophy, as to the more or less shadowy opinions which lay behind the movement called Transcendentalism, there can be no doubt that, so far as literature went, it was the

beginning of a new era for America. In the very first number of the *Dial*, upon its first page Emerson announced it as its primary aim "to make new demands on literature"; and it is worth noticing that this original movement had its roots at several different points in Old Cambridge.

The plan of a new periodical had been discussed between Hedge and Margaret Fuller — both natives of Cambridge — as early as March 5, 1835, the latter writing, "Your periodical plan charms me." In the autumn of 1836, the bicentennial of Harvard University was held, and four young clergymen — Emerson, Hedge, Ripley, and Putnam — had an almost casual meeting at Willard's Hotel, now the electric railway station at Harvard Square in Cambridge; where began a series of consultations, afterwards adjourned to Boston and to Concord, culminating in a club called variously the Symposium Club, the Transcendental Club, and the Hedge Club, — the latter name because its meetings were timed to suit the occasional visit of Hedge, then settled in Bangor, Maine. At a meeting of this club on September 18, 1839,

Mr. Alcott records in his memoranda that Margaret Fuller "gave her views of the proposed 'Dial,' which she afterwards edited." This is the first record, so far as I know, of the precise name of the periodical, this being apparently borrowed from a manuscript bearing the same name and composed by Mr. Alcott.[1]

Meanwhile, to accentuate the literary tendency of the new movement in a yet more marked way, a young Harvard graduate, Robert Bartlett of Plymouth, then Latin tutor at the University, who was an occasional member or visitor of the Symposium Club, had taken for his Master of Arts oration in 1839 this daring theme, "No good possible but shall one day be real," and had thus boldly turned his searchlight upon the position and prospects of American literature: —

"When Horace was affecting to make himself a Greek poet, the genius of his country, the shade of immortal Romulus, stood over him, *post mediam noctem visus quum somnia vera*, and forbade the perversion. . . . Is everything so sterile and pygmy here in New England, that

[1] Alcott's MS. Diary, XIV. 79.

we must all, writers and readers, be forever replenishing ourselves with the mighty wonders of the Old World? Is not the history of this people transcendent in the chronicles of the world for pure, homogeneous sublimity and beauty and richness? Go down some ages of ages from this day, compress the years from the landing of the Pilgrims to the death of Washington into the same span as the first two centuries of Athens now fill in our memories. Will men then come hither from all regions of the globe — will the tomb of Washington, the rock of the Puritans, then become classic to the world? will these spots and relics here give them inspiration, the theme, the image of the poet and orator and sculptor, and be the ground of splendid mythologies? . . . We do not express the men and the miracles of our history in our social action, and correspondingly, ay, and *by consequence,* we do not outwrite them in poetry or art. We are looking abroad and back after a literature. Let us come and live, and know in living a high philosophy and faith; so shall we find now, here, the elements, and in our own good souls the fire. Of every storied bay and

cliff and plain, we will make something infinitely nobler than Salamis or Marathon. This pale Massachusetts sky, this sandy soil and raw wind, all shall nurture us: —

> "O Nature, less is all of thine,
> Than are thy borrowings from our human breast.

"Rich skies, fair fields, shall come to us, suffused with the immortal hues of spirit, of beauteous act and thought. Unlike all the world before us, our own age and land shall be classic to ourselves."

This was the attitude of mind which the new periodical was to represent; but Alcott writes of its prospects in his diary (November 1, 1839): "Half a dozen men exhaust our list of contributors; Emerson, Hedge, Miss Fuller, Ripley, [W. H.] Channing, Dwight, [J. F.] Clarke, are our dependence." It is to be noticed that, of this club of seven, Hedge and Miss Fuller were Cambridge born; Emerson and Channing had resided in Cambridge with their parents; while all but Miss Fuller were Harvard graduates. This certainly established at the outset a very close connection between the new literary movement and Old Cambridge; and among its later writers

Lowell, Cranch, and Miss S. S. Jacobs were residents of Cambridge, while others, as Parker, Dwight, Thoreau, and Ellery Channing had spent more or less time at the University.

Sarah Margaret Fuller, afterward Countess of Ossoli, was quite as distinctly as either Holmes or Lowell the product of Cambridge; whose academic influences, though applied indirectly, were what trained her mind, impaired her health, and brought out certain hereditary qualities which were not altogether attractive. She left a fragment of autobiographical romance in which she vividly describes the horrors of the intellectual forcing process to which she had been subjected, and though this sketch, as her brother suggests, must not be taken too literally, and though it was only, as has since been pointed out, what was applied to all the professors' children, yet it would now be regarded as extreme and objectionable. When she was fifteen and had returned from a short experience of boarding-school, her actual mode of life was as follows: she rose before five in summer, walked an hour, practised an hour on the piano, breakfasted at seven, read Sis-

mondi's "European Literature" in French till eight, then Brown's "Philosophy" till half-past nine, then went to school for Greek at twelve, then practised again till dinner. After the early dinner she read two hours in Italian, then walked or rode; and in the evening played, sang, and retired at eleven to write in her diary. All this was at the time of year when young girls are now entering upon their summer vacation or speeding over hill and vale on their bicycles. This was the period when she went to school with Dr. Holmes and overwhelmed him by beginning her first essay with the sentence, "It is a trite remark," whereas he confesses that at that time he did not even know the meaning of the word *trite*. All this early Cambridge training, if it did not make her a systematic thinker, made her an inexhaustible reader and a patient editor. Her friend, Dr. Frederic Henry Hedge, who had been five years in Germany, had taken his Harvard degree, and had studied theology in the Cambridge Divinity School, was undoubtedly the best-trained and most methodical of the early Transcendentalists, and contributed

to the management of the *Dial* whatever of steadfastness it had. He, like his friend Margaret, had drunk deeply at the newly opened well of German literature, and he was one of the best translators of that language, so that they were both ready and willing to enrich American letters from this source. He also introduced her to Emerson, who had then removed from Cambridge to Concord, and the editorship of the *Dial* was always limited to these three. The magazine was, therefore, always kept substantially in Cambridge hands.

The three papers, by these several editors, which gave the literary keynote to the new periodical, were the opening address, "The Editors to the Reader," by Emerson, "An Essay on Critics," by Margaret Fuller, — both these being in the first number, — and an essay in the second number called "The Art of Life; the Scholar's Calling," by Hedge. The latter has passages distinctly bearing on our literary future as seen from 1840: —

"Hitherto our literature has been but an echo of other voices and climes. Generally, in the history of nations, song has preceded

science, and the feeling of a people has been sooner developed than its understanding. With us this order has been reversed. The national understanding is fully ripe, but the feeling, the imagination of the people, has found as yet no adequate expression. We have our men of science, our Franklins, our Bowditches, our Cleavelands; we have our orators, our statesmen; but the American poet, the American thinker, is yet to come. A deeper culture must lay the foundation for him who shall worthily represent the genius and utter the life of this continent. A severer discipline must prepare the way for our Dantes, our Shakespeares, our Miltons. 'He who would write an epic,' said one of these, 'must make his life an epic.' This touches our infirmity. We have no practical poets, — no epic lives. Let us but have sincere livers, earnest, whole-hearted, heroic men, and we shall not want for writers and for literary fame. Then shall we see springing up, in every part of these Republics, a literature such as the ages have not known, — a literature commensurate with our idea, vast as our destiny, and varied as our theme."

This was, it must be seen, a distinct reaffirmation of the position previously taken by Robert Bartlett and shows how definite and earnest, on the literary side at least, was the aim of the Transcendentalists. In temperament, no doubt, they differed enormously — Alcott and Parker, for instance, representing almost the opposite extremes of the ideal and practical; but so far as literature was concerned their aim was one. All wished to create such a literature, to hold it to a high standard and to make it representative of the new world in which it was born. Literature had in its plans a position which had been assigned to it in no previous outburst of the American mind. To these men and women, most of the New York *Knickerbocker* school probably appeared as triflers, and the *North American* contributors as merely academic. They reached doubtless but a limited audience, as do most reformers; they committed fantastic follies, but so do the saints everywhere. As a result they distinctly influenced the national literature; much, for instance, of the power now attributed to Emerson being

really the unconscious result of the total movement. Fame is very chary of personal rights; it is difficult to erect a new altar. Everything tends to concentrate on a single name, and just as for years every good thing said in Boston was ultimately attributed to Holmes or Motley or Tom Appleton, so one sees to this day phrases credited to Emerson which really belonged to Alcott or Parker or Hedge. The late John S. Dwight was perhaps more boldly robbed and complimented than any other of his circle; since his poem called "Rest," —

> Sweet is the pleasure
> Itself cannot spoil;
> Is not true leisure
> One with true toil? —

still appears periodically as an occasional resurrection in the newspapers, but always as a translation from some supposed poem of Goethe.

Dwight was very probably a divinity student at Cambridge when this poem was composed, he having left that institution in 1836; and enough has at any rate been written to show that Cambridge was in many respects the seed-ground of that intellectual

impulse which was harvested later at the house of Emerson in Concord, whither he removed in 1834, having left Cambridge in 1826. It is to be observed also that, of the later writers in the *Dial*, Christopher Pearce Cranch, who wrote much in it, was in his later life a resident of Cambridge; that Lowell contributed several sonnets to the second volume; that William Henry Channing, who wrote the serial "Ernest the Seeker," from time to time resided in Cambridge, where his mother dwelt permanently, being much of the time an occupant of the house now known as Fay House and the headquarters of Radcliffe College. It is also to be noticed that his cousin, William Ellery Channing, furnished for the last volume of the *Dial* a series of papers called "Youth of the Poet and the Painter," the scene of which was in part laid at Harvard College. It will thus be seen at what a variety of points the *Dial* touched Old Cambridge.

3. *The Atlantic Monthly*

I know of no book or essay in which the history of the *Atlantic Monthly* is carried far

enough back. Even the best of these narratives, that of Mr. J. T. Trowbridge in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January, 1895, entitled "The Author of Quabbin," speaks as if the *Atlantic Monthly* had no existence, even prospectively, before 1857, whereas it was really planned as to all its details in 1853, four years sooner. The late Mr. Francis H. Underwood gave the fullest indication of this when he wrote in *Our Day* (December, 1891): "It was the project of a young enthusiast [Mr. Underwood himself], who desired to enlist the leading authors of New England in the crusade against slavery, and it had been the subject of conferences at intervals with Lowell, Longfellow, and Mrs. Stowe for more than three years." The following letters, both addressed to me, — I was then living in Worcester, Massachusetts, — will explain what occurred during these intervening years: —

BOSTON, November 21, 1853.

DEAR SIR, — Messrs. J. P. Jewett & Co. of this city propose to establish a Literary and Anti-Slavery magazine — commencing probably in January. The publishers have energy and capital, and will spare no pains to make the

enterprise completely successful. They will endeavor to obtain contributions from the best writers, and will pay liberally for all they make use of. Politics and the "Humanities," though, of course, prominent as giving character to the Magazine, will occupy but a small portion of its pages. Current literary topics, new books, the Fine Arts, and other matters of interest to the reading public will receive the most careful attention.

I am desired to request you to become a contributor. If you are disposed to favor the project, and have anything written at this time, please forward the MS. with your reply.

If not, please state whether we may expect to receive an article soon — if before Dec. 5th, it will materially oblige us. If permitted, we shall announce you as a contributor, in the prospectus. The articles will all be anonymous, as in Putnam's Monthly.

Your early attention is respectfully solicited. With high regard,

Truly yours,

FRANCIS H. UNDERWOOD.

BOSTON, November 25, 1853.

MY DEAR SIR, — Our Magazine is not yet *definitely* determined upon. *Probably*, however, it will be commenced. The letters I wrote for the enlistment of contributors have been mostly answered favorably. We have already a very respectable list engaged. We are waiting to hear definitely from Mrs. Stowe, whom we *hope* will be induced to commence in the Feb. no. a new story. We are thankful for the interest you manifest by sending new names. I shall write to Mr. Hurlbut at once, and to

the others in a day or two. Those who have already promised to write are Mr. Carter (formerly of the Commonwealth), who will furnish a political article for each number, Mr. Hildreth (very much interested in the undertaking), Thos. W. Parsons, author of an excellent translation of Dante, Parke Godwin of the New York Evening Post, Mr. Ripley of the Tribune, Dr. Elder of Phil[a], H. D. Thoreau of Concord, Theodore Parker (my most valued friend), Edmund Quincy, James R. Lowell (from whom I have a most exquisite gem).

Many to whom I have written have not replied as yet.

I shall have the *general* supervision of the Magazine,— intending to get the *best* aid from professed littérateurs in the several departments. We *do* expect to pay as much as Putnam — that is at the rate of three dollars for such pages as Putnam's, though it is probable that we shall use a trifle larger type than our New York contemporary. Poetry, of course, we pay for according to value. There are not above six men in America (known to me) to whom I would pay *anything* for poetry. There is no medium; it is good or it is good-for-nothing. Lowell I esteem most; after him Whittier (the last I confidently expect to secure).

The first no. will probably be late — as late as Jan. 5, or even 10th. It is unavoidable. But in Feb. we shall get before the wind.

Mr. Jewett will be liberal as to heresy. Indeed he is almost a heretic himself. For myself I am a member of Mr. Parker's society; but as we must get support moral and pecuniary from the whole community, we shall *strive* to offend neither side. In haste,

Most gratefully yours,

FRANCIS H. UNDERWOOD.

The magazine thus indicated, which was clearly identified in plan and material with the *Atlantic*, was delayed four years in its birth by the business failure of John P. Jewett & Co., who were to have been its publishers.

Mr. Underwood himself says, in the same article, "After long efforts the due coöperation was secured and responsible publishers were found to take it up." He elsewhere states, "It was planned at a dinner where fourteen persons were present." This was presumably the dinner of which Longfellow says in his diary (May 20, 1857): "Dined in town with the new Magazine Club, discussing title, etc., with no result." He has already spoken of a previous meeting (May 5), when he "dined in town with Emerson, Lowell, Motley, Holmes, Cabot, Underwood, and the publisher Phillips, to talk about the new magazine the last wishes to establish. It will no doubt be done; though I am not so eager about it as the rest."[1] There were apparently but eight persons at this dinner, one-half of these being of Cambridge birth or

[1] "Journal and Letters," II. pp. 298, 299. Compare Phillips's letter in Cooke's "J. S. Dwight," p. 243.

residence, since Underwood had lately removed thither. Assuming that the meeting of May 20th was that of which Underwood speaks, we know that Longfellow, Underwood, and Felton were there, and probably Holmes and Lowell, so that this company also was half or almost half made up of Cantabrigians. At any rate, the two original editors, Lowell and Underwood, were Cantabrigians by residence; and Lowell could now transfer to it, on a more liberal scale, the plans which he and Robert Carter had formed for the short-lived *Pioneer*. In the later period of the magazine, Howells at one time resided in Cambridge, as did, for a year, his successor, Aldrich. Its last two editors, Messrs. H. E. Scudder and W. H. Page, have been and still are denizens of the University city. There has thus been no editor of the magazine, except Fields, who has not at some time dwelt in Cambridge.

The following list comprises many of those who were during at least some period of the *Atlantic's* existence, if not the whole, to be classed as Cambridge authors, together with the total of contributions credited to each in

the "Atlantic Index," of 1888: W. D. Howells, 399; T. S. Perry, 355; H. E. Scudder, 196; O. W. Holmes, 181; G. P. Lathrop, 168; W. F. Apthorp, 134; Henry James, Jr., 134; J. R. Lowell, 132; T. W. Higginson, 117; T. B. Aldrich, 110; John Fiske, 89; G. E. Woodberry, 73; H. W. Longfellow, 68; C. P. Cranch, 45; C. E. Norton, 44; N. S. Shaler, 32; R. W. Emerson, 29; Henry James, Sr., 19; W. W. Story, 17; Wilson Flagg, 14; William James, 12. This is, of course, a merely quantitative estimate, in which a brief critical paper may count for as much as the most important original work; but the point of interest is that it comprises almost every one of those who were, tried by this numerical standard, the main contributors. Thus judged, it may almost be said that the bulk of the magazine, for a long series of years, has been furnished by those who may in some sense be claimed as Cambridge authors. In fact, the only other person whose contributions reached the hundred mark was Whittier.

It is thus evident that in the case of the *Atlantic Monthly*, as with the *North American*

Review and the *Dial*, nearly all the editors and most of the larger contributors were either natives of Cambridge or at some time residents there, apart from their mere college training. And it may fairly be claimed that their labors were not quite wasted, inasmuch as Motley, who was not a Cambridge resident, wrote from England on May 16, 1858, that the *Atlantic Monthly* was at that time "unquestionably the best magazine in the English language." [1]

[1] Motley's "Letters," I. p. 224.

III

HOLMES

III

HOLMES

It was a favorite theory of Oliver Wendell Holmes that every man's biography should be studied for several generations before his birth. In applying this doctrine to himself I can unfortunately go no farther back than the matrimonial engagement of his parents, which was thus announced in writing by my own mother, then a schoolgirl in Boston, addressing a lady in Hingham, whom my mother, being then an orphan, called "mama."

"Now, mama, I am going to surprise you. Mr. Abiel Holmes of Cambridge, whom we so kindly chalked out for Miss N. W. [Nancy Williams, afterward Mrs. Loammi Baldwin] is going to be married, & of all folks in the world guess who to — Miss Sally Wendell! I am sure you will not believe it, however it is an absolute fact, for Harriot and M. Jackson told Miss P. Russell so, who told us; it has been kept secret for six

weeks, nobody knows for what, I could not believe it for some time & scarcely can now however it is a fact they say. Mama must pay the wedding visit."

This piece of girlish logic was ultimately justified, and the gossip thus transmitted through a series of young ladies was confirmed. The impression produced by the letter on the most distinguished child of this union may be seen in the following note: —

164 CHARLES ST., July 7, 1868.

MY DEAR MR. HIGGINSON, — I thank you for the curious little scrap of information so nearly involving my dearest interests, — whether I should be myself or somebody else, — and such a train of vital facts as my household shews (*sic*) me.

How oddly our antenatal history comes out! A few months ago my classmate Devens told me he had recently seen an old woman who spoke of remembering me as a baby and that I was brought up on the bottle — which has made me feel as tenderly every time I visit my wine cellar as Romulus and Remus did when Faustula carried them to the menagerie and showed them the wolf in his cage.

Our life is half under ground — *quantum vertice*, etc.

Here are two rootlets of mine that accident has brought to light, not very important to the race, but having an odd sort of interest for one at least.

Very truly yours,

O. W. HOLMES.

In childhood I became intimate with the household circle in which Oliver Wendell Holmes was born and bred, the intimacy coming from the fact that my father's house stood next to it and that Dr. Holmes's nephew, Charles Parsons, — afterward Professor Parsons of Brown University, — was my especial playmate. The place was, like many country parsonages of that day, practically a farmhouse with its accompanying acres. It included the ground now covered by several college buildings in the neighborhood and it extended over the playgrounds now called Holmes's Field. There were cultivated fields and many outbuildings, sheltering horses and cattle; and one of the happiest spots to us was the corn-barn, raised on high posts, where we shelled corn on rainy days. In the house our favorite playing place was the garret described by Dr. Holmes in his "Professor at the Breakfast Table." It was in reference to this garret that he wrote, "The worst of a modern stylish mansion is that it has no place for ghosts." In this garret there was abundant room for them; it possessed locked closets for their express accommodation.

Looking in through the keyholes we could see old leather portmanteaux looking "like stranded porpoises," as Holmes describes them, or andirons waiting to resume their places in the chimneys. In the large outer garret we could see names written with diamonds on the window-panes — names of students who had taken their degrees before the Revolutionary War. Among them was the name of John Tracy, beneath which some one, possibly a rival in scholarship or love, had written *stultus* by way of brief verdict. We knew that in this house the battle of Bunker Hill was planned, and we knew that on yonder green the American soldiers had halted for prayers from the college president ere they marched to the field. Looking across the common, then unfenced, we saw the tree beneath which Washington had taken command of the Continental Army, and not far off was the old churchyard, and Dr. Holmes had made that plot of ground classic to us by poems which we knew by heart. We pondered over those long inscriptions where, as Holmes himself has said, "The dead presidents stretched their weary bones under epitaphs stretched out at as full

length as their subjects." We chose out the very stone he describes in the poem, "The empty urn of pride" as he calls it — the tomb of the Vassall family bearing only "the goblet and the sun" (Vas-sol) until desecrated in these later years by the addition of name and date. Holmes had also found out that tombstone of the French exile near Christ Church and had written: —

Lean o'er the slender western wall,
Ye ever-roaming girls;
The wind that bids the blossom fall
May lift your floating curls
To sweep the simple lines that tell
An exile's date and doom,
And sigh, for where his daughters dwell
They wreathe the stranger's tomb.

The force of this was not diminished to us by the fact that the little Cambridge maidens with whom we went to dancing school might frequently be seen wandering through the churchyard; and that curls were then so universally worn, it really seemed as if the damsels might have put them on with their straw hats. Perhaps more interesting to us

than any of these localities was the grave of our poet's sister, of whom Holmes wrote: —

> If sinless angels love as we
> Who stood that bier beside,
> Three seraph welcomes greeted thee,
> The daughter, sister, bride.

And we faithfully took the poet's word for it that the locust grove in the churchyard would "swing its orient flowers" long after the two church spires had crumbled, although now, alas! the grove has long since disappeared, and the steeples remain. All this had been a part of Dr. Holmes's boyhood, as of mine, and he like me had also "tumbled about in a library," namely, his own father's, though fourteen years earlier. There was an inexhaustible set of volumes in it, placed near the floor as if for children to reach — the delightful quartos of "Rees' Cyclopædia," whose numerous plates of baboons and paroquets were to us of endless interest. If perchance their attraction waned, there was always the resource of building fortresses on the floor with the kindly quartos and playing the battle of Bunker Hill behind them, using for ammunition the store of winter apples then kept

in barrels within the closet of every faithful and studious clergyman. How dear this study was to Holmes himself may be seen in this letter, written after I had described, at a breakfast given him by his publishers,[1] an occasion where his kindly old father had turned from his sermon or his "American Annals" to draw for us in frost on the window-pane a sketch of bristling bushes, with stars above and with the wholesome motto "*Per aspera ad astra.*"

BOSTON, December 14, 1879.

MY DEAR HIGGINSON, — If I have already thanked you once it is no matter, — let me thank you again for that delightful reminiscence of my father and of the old study. I have a set of book shelves in my brain where every volume is in its place. I can see the frost on the window — though I do not remember the particular season — and act over the whole little domestic scene in my imagination. Nothing for a long time has called up that picture of the study and my kind-hearted old father — not so old or so white-haired as I am now, at that time — so vividly as your story. . . .

Once more — twice more, if I have already written, I thank you.

Faithfully yours,

O. W. HOLMES.

[1] *Atlantic Monthly*, XLV., supplement.

Dr. Holmes was born, it will be remembered, August 29, 1809, graduated at Harvard in 1829, studied law for a year and a half, then studied medicine in Europe for two years and a half, took his degree at the Harvard Medical School in 1836, became Professor at Dartmouth in 1838, and Professor at the Harvard Medical School in 1847. He was thus away from Cambridge during most of my boyhood, and my memory first depicts him vividly when he came back to give his Phi Beta Kappa poem in 1836. He was at this time a young physician of great promise, which was thought to be rather impaired by his amusing himself with poetry. So at least, he always thought; and he cautioned in later years a younger physician, Dr. Weir Mitchell, to avoid the fault which he had committed, advising him to be known exclusively as a physician until his reputation in that line should be made. The effect of levity conveyed by this poem — which was in the main a serious, not to say a ponderous, one — was due largely to certain passages which he described as "wanting in dignity" and only partly reprinted in an appendix. Especially criticised was one

passage in which he gallantly enumerated the probable names of the various young ladies in the gallery, mentioning, for instance,

> A hundred Marys, and that only one
> Whose smile awaits me when my song is done.

These statistics of admiration were not thought altogether suitable to an academic poem, and the claim itself in regard to the young lady may have proved a little premature, inasmuch as she subsequently married Holmes's friend Motley, the historian.

He had undoubtedly in his manners to young ladies of that period a tone of airy love-making, suitable to one lately returned from gay Paris; and his poem "To a Lady," boasting of the change in her manner since he first left America "a pallid boy," may easily have had an actual foundation. It is to be remembered, however, that he had at this period a look of physical insignificance, which his middle years greatly amended by additional flesh; at Phi Beta Kappa dinners he used to stand up in a chair to sing his songs, and his juvenile look was even considered something of an obstacle to his early

success in medical practice. Dr. Walter Channing of Boston, grandfather of the present physician of that name, was fond of telling a story of his taking Dr. Holmes with him in consultation to visit an invalid lady in a suburb of Boston, who rose in her bed as they entered the room and said peevishly: "Dr. Channing, why do you bring that little boy in here? Take him away! This is no place for boys." Upon which the young physician retired in wrath and refused to reënter the room when the patient was propitiated.

Dr. Holmes did not remain long in the active practice of his profession, but for many years he was — as some boy by a fortunate blunder described him — "Professor of Monotony" in the Harvard Medical School; not that his teachings were ever monotonous, for they were always marked with vivacity and variety; but it is possible that the employment may have sometimes grown fatiguing. He varied it by much vivacious social life and by a good deal of lecturing before the popular lyceums then so much in vogue. He did not go to distant parts of the country, but was in New England one of the

most unfailingly popular among lecturers. He met, however, this obstacle in lecturing, as sometimes in literature, that he made very abrupt transitions from humor to pathos, so that his hearers did not always follow him; and sometimes, when the joke was over and he had suddenly passed into deep emotion, they would not recognize the change of key and would laugh harder than ever. He was at this time, as always, a perpetual fountain of original thought and illustration, but did not seem a man of strong convictions, and was essentially conservative in attitude. The accounts of slave insurrections and of the imaginary New York negro plot had left upon his mind, as he himself said, "impressions which it took Garrison years to root out"; he was easily moved to wrath at phrenology, homœopathy, and all the pseudo-sciences as he called them; but almost equally disapproved the prevailing taste for German literature, calling Jean Paul, in one poem, "a German-Silver Spoon."

The later influence of Emerson, and in some degree of Lowell, tended to diminish some of these antagonisms, and certainly nothing could

be more felicitous than his delineation of Emerson as "an iconoclast who took down our idols so gently that it seemed like an act of worship." The Civil War on the one side and some tilts against theological prejudices, on the other, had the effect of throwing him in later life toward the party of attack, and, as almost always happens in such cases, this seemed a source of fresh life and happiness to him. His course of development was thus somewhat opposite to that of Lowell, who took his radicalism first and in a tolerably undiluted form, becoming afterward more conservative; while the even nature of Longfellow, tempted into no extremes, remained in much the same attitude during his whole life.

In regard to Holmes's intellectual life, it is a rare thing for a man nearly fifty years old to strike out a wholly new career; and this doubtless happened to Holmes on the publication of the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table." This is all the more remarkable from the fact that he had begun a similar venture long before without attracting much attention. It is common to say that the success of the Autocrat chapters

was instantaneous and overwhelming. I am sure that this was not quite the case, for I remember well that Underwood, when I expressed delight at the first number, seemed very glad to have me say it, because there was, as he said, a minority of readers, who were disposed to pooh-pooh it, and maintained that Dr. Holmes was "a tiresome little man." This was perhaps only the natural Nemesis encountered by a joker of many years' standing; at any rate all such malcontents soon passed into oblivion and were heard no more.

He disarmed criticism in the end by courageously persisting in the same method which had originally produced it, namely, by the most fearless intimacy with his audience, never keeping back any jest or any expression of confidence. He frankly says in one place that good talkers are very apt to be bores, — thus meeting criticism halfway. The discursiveness of his articles only matches the same quality of his mind; and there probably never was a man whose conversation and whose writing were so little unlike. I knew one celebrated talker in Rhode Island who astonished a dinner party

by reciting the birthdays of all the British queens. It seemed a deed impossible except for a Macaulay, until later in the day the butler brought to the host a little printed volume containing odds and ends of information, and including just this list of queen's birthdays. It had fallen from the pocket of this particular guest and was restored to him without comment. Such a misfortune would have been absolutely impossible to Dr. Holmes. He had no marked development of systematic memory, but his accumulation of odds and ends of knowledge was unsurpassed, and this is what a talker, or indeed a literary man as such, chiefly needs. His ready wit supplied the rest. It is to be noticed also that he had an arsenal of his own in a scientific direction from which he could draw weapons not accessible to others. He mercilessly talked down other talkers, yet not by a strategy, only through an irrepressible affluence which left them no room.

There was a legend that he once met in the street the late Tom Appleton, at that time the second best talker in Boston, who told him a capital story. It turned out that they were

going to the same dinner party, and Holmes said to himself, "That story will be Appleton's *pièce de résistance;* it will be good fun to circumvent him." Accordingly, before they had begun upon their soup, Holmes burst out with the story. It won immense success, and Appleton sat glum and silent through the rest of the dinner. There was nothing really malicious about it; it was simply a joke, although, it must be confessed, a little cruel. If the tables had been turned, Holmes would have laughed it off, instead of growing morose upon it. Appleton was possibly, I have sometimes thought, a more brilliant talker than either Holmes or Lowell; while he was not their equal in thought, yet his knowledge of society was more varied, and perhaps I have never in my life been so heartily amused as once at a *tête-à-tête* dinner with him in his bachelor house at Newport, when for two hours he mainly sustained the conversation and seemed at the end to have passed in review, in the most brilliant way, half the celebrities of Europe. He was perhaps more arrogant and self-imposing than either Holmes or Lowell, yet he knew better when to change the subject;

but one never felt quite sure that he was not studiously working up a point, which Holmes never did; the flow being too spontaneous for that. On the other hand neither of these three eminent talkers could be relied upon for tact, as was shown at the famous dinner to Dr. and Mrs. Stowe which I have elsewhere described, and at which Lowell discoursed to Mrs. Stowe at one end of the table on the superiority of "Tom Jones" to all other novels, while Holmes demonstrated to Dr. Stowe, at the other end, that profane swearing really originated in the pulpit.

Holmes's literary opinions belonged, as compared with Lowell's, to an earlier generation. Holmes was still influenced by the school of Pope, whom Lowell disliked, although his father had admired him. We notice this influence in Holmes's frequent recurrence to the ten-syllable verse; in his unwillingness to substitute dactyls for spondees; and in his comments on Emerson's versification, which remind one of those of Johnson on Milton. He has a great aversion to what he calls "the crowding of a redundant syllable into a line." He says, for

instance, "Can any ear reconcile itself to the last of these three lines of Emerson's:—

> "Oh, what is heaven but the fellowship
> Of minds that each can stand against the world
> By its own meek and incorruptible will?"

He goes on to denounce "these lines that lift their back up in the middle, span-worm lines, we may call them," of which he says that "they have invaded some of our recent poetry as the canker-worms gather on our elms in June." It does not stand recorded how Holmes was affected by Coleridge's "Christabel," which emancipated English poetry from the shadow of Pope; but it is pretty certain that he would not have approved of it. Lyrical and lilting measures did not ordinarily appeal to him, except in the case of Moore, whose lilt has a definite beat, and whose verses he used in later life to read to young people who had almost forgotten the Irish poet's name. It was perhaps partly a result of all this that Holmes was, according to the *Quarterly Review*, "at one time in disrepute with the more advanced of his countrymen. He was accused

of attaching excessive importance to conventionalities of dress, manners, and speech. He was charged with using his influence to starve and paralyze literary originality."

I do not clearly know what was meant by the first of these charges, but it might, doubtless, be said that Dr. Holmes was always conventional, though never in any sense a fop or an exquisite — to revert to the phrase of that day. With an unconcealed preference for what is called the best society, he yet had, in his early medical practice, the advantage enjoyed by all of that profession, in alternating between the houses of rich and poor, and learning that they are composed mentally, as physically, of much the same material. He also had, as Mr. Morse his biographer admits, a tinge of the sporting man about him, liked to see a fast trot, and describes the taste for horse flesh of his own Major Rowens in "Elsie Venner" so vividly that the most confirmed pedestrian can hardly read the account without a thrill. He knew the records of the prize ring, and sometimes measured the muscles of fighting champions, perhaps with-

out ever seeing them fight. Like many small men he had a marked appreciation for large size, whether in trees or men, loving to measure the one or chat with the other.

For some years before the Civil War, when rowing was coming into vogue and wherries were built, he used to row on Charles River, and he describes his enjoyment of this in an early paper of the "Autocrat." He told me that he gave this up during the war because of perpetual solicitude about his son and other favorite young men who were at the front; he said that he could not bear to be beyond call. He thus took his part in the marked rise of interest in physical training which occurred about that time, although his then puny look led many people to regard such tastes as being somewhat amateurish in him. He suffered greatly during his whole career from asthma, which many people outgrow with years, though he did not. When I lived in Newport he once came there to spend a week at the house of the late Mrs. John Jacob Astor — who was perhaps the last of the New York millionnaires to exhibit a positive

taste for the society of literary men — and that he had to leave, after a single night's stay, because of a severe attack of his chronic complaint. It is a curious fact about the climate of Newport that some people come there expressly to be cured of asthma, while others have to leave the town in order to shake it off.

Holmes's relation to science now appears, when seen from the literary point of view, to have been more that of the poet than of the man of science. "None but Holmes," says Professor Dwight, his associate, "could have compared the microscopical coiled tube of a sweat-gland to a fairy's intestine." He was also one of the early microscopists, and these are themselves the poets of science. He suggested in 1872, before Percival Lowell did, the snows on Mars; and described a plant, considered as a companion for a sick room, in the true Darwinian spirit as "an innocent, delightfully idiotic being that is not troubled with any of our poor human weaknesses and irritabilities." Dr. Cheever says of him that "he was too sympathetic to practise medicine,

and when he thought it necessary to use a freshly killed rabbit for demonstration he always left his assistant to chloroform it and besought him not to let it squeak." He believed in the elevating influence of the medical profession, and said that "Goldsmith and even Smollett, both having studied and practised medicine, could not, by any possibility, have outraged all the natural feelings in delicacy and decency, as Swift and Zola have outraged them." Yet Holmes gave away his medical books in middle life to the Boston Medical Library; and after this he prized science as the poet loves it for the images and analogies it affords, even as Coleridge went to Sir Humphry Davy's lectures in order to acquire a stock of new metaphors.

In speaking of Holmes's relation to the reforms going on about him, it is pleasant to recall an occasion where both his generosity and his wit were called into play, when there was some agitation among his students in regard to the practice of medicine by women. At the opening of the new building of the Harvard Medical School, after speaking, in his

address, on woman as a nurse, he said, "I have always felt that this was rather the vocation of woman than general medical, and especially surgical, practice." This was received with loud applause from the conservative side, then prevailing. He quietly went on, "Yet I myself followed the course of lectures given by the young Madame Lachapelle in Paris; and if here and there an intrepid woman insists on taking by storm the fortress of medical education, I would have the gate flung open to her, as if it were that of the citadel of Orleans and she Joan of Arc returning from the field of victory." Professor Dwight, who was present, adds: "The enthusiasm which this sentiment called forth was so overwhelming, that those of us who had led the first applause felt, perhaps looked, rather foolish. I have since suspected that Dr. Holmes, who always knew his audience, had kept back the real climax to lure us to our destruction."[1]

His theological heresies, as they were once considered, were really the outcome of the scientific habit of his mind; and perhaps partly

[1] Holmes's "Life and Letters," I. p. 186.

of that impulse which makes the most conservative temperament yearn to identify itself, at least for once in its life, with the party of revolt. It will seem incredible in future years that young people were sometimes forbidden to read the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," as being a work of irreligious tendency; yet its author's criticisms on the then established faith of New England were from the point of view of human sympathy and not of technical theology. He did not wish, in his own words, to suggest perplexities in order to "bother Bridget, the wild Irish girl, or Joyce Heth, the centenarian, or any other intellectual non-combatant"; but he simply wished to base religion upon justice and common humanity. The sentence which seemed most profane, "If a created being has no rights which his Creator is bound to respect, there is an end to all moral relations between them," would now alarm few thinking persons. The "crippled souls" of the world were those who roused all his sympathy most promptly. As for the external side, he was all his life a regular church-goer on the ground, as he said, that there was "in the corner of his

heart a plant called Reverence, which needed to be watered about once a week."

It was on yet deeper questions that his three novels, well characterized by an elderly lady as his "medicated novels," all turned in different degrees. The first of these, "Elsie Venner," achieved a permanent fame both as a picture of New England life and as a scientific study. How widely either has achieved that popular recognition which is so poor a test of literary work cannot now be told. It is known that in one country town of New England, the local bookseller, on being asked if he had any of Dr. Holmes's novels, replied that he had never heard of him or them, but that Mrs. Mary Jane Holmes had written lovely books and that he had some of those. He himself would have enjoyed this joke, for he says with his accustomed cheerfulness, "The highways of literature are spread over with shells of dead novels, each of which the age has swallowed up at a mouthful and done with."

He certainly cannot be charged with neglecting among these abstract speculations the essential qualities of conscience or even of religious

faith. Few persons have stated this last more finely than where he says, after pointing out that there are two sides to every one, as with a piece of money, "I've seen an old woman who wouldn't fetch five cents if you put her up at auction, and yet, come to read the other side of her, she had a trust in God Almighty that was like the bow anchor of a three-decker."

Side by side with this fine recognition must be placed that admirable letter to Mr. James William Kimball, in which Dr. Holmes states his creed as definitely and clearly as one who passes for a heretic can be expected to present it.

MARCH 18, 1860.

. . . I reciprocate all your kindly feelings most cordially, and I have no doubt that if all the "evangelicals" I have known had had hearts and tempers like yours, I should have looked less critically at some of their beliefs. Let me repeat it, — I have no wish to change your belief in anything, so far as it is adapted to your spiritual nature and necessities. Much of it I share with you: a supreme and absolute faith in one great Father; a revelation of Himself, "at sundry times and in divers manners," — infallibly in creation, more or less fallibly in all that has been committed to human tradition, preëminently in the

life of one of the "sons of God" known on earth as the Anointed, of whom we have some imperfect records. That religion consists in holy affections, the evidence of which is in righteous life. If you believe that man is born under a curse derived from Adam, I do not. If you believe that a finite being is allowed to ruin himself forever, I do not. At any rate I am sure you *hope not*. If you accept the whole collection of tracts called "the Bible" — the canon of which represents a *majority vote*, nothing more or less — as infallible, I think your ground is *demonstrably* untenable.[1]

If it is to be admitted, as it generally is, that "The Chambered Nautilus" is the high-water mark of Holmes's poetry, — and this not merely from the perfect beauty of its structure, but from the elevation of its theme, — it is worth while to notice that remarkable bit of prose statement left behind by him in a letter written *impromptu* to Mr. John Lindley on the subject of personal immortality. It is justly designated by Mr. J. T. Morse, who edits it, as "very striking" and he adds, "It stands by itself solitary, so far as I know, amid all that he has publicly or privately written." An exquisitely truthful and delicate statement of

[1] Holmes's "Life and Letters," II. p. 147.

the highest point of conviction yet attained on that subject by many highly trained minds, it also seems to me a wonderfully condensed and vigorous piece of writing, and it is to be read in connection with that remarkable passage in "Elsie Venner," where the author speculates in respect to the attempted murder of his young schoolmaster.

BOSTON, December 28, 1867.

DEAR SIR, — I should prefer to say that I *trust* there will be a righting of this world's evils for each and all of us in a future state, than say that I share the unquestioning certainty of many of those about me.

The natural argument seems to me against the supposition. In the year 1800 I was not, to the best of my knowledge. Since that time my consciousness has been evoked and my experiences have been accumulated. I do not see that I have any natural ground for claiming the future any more than the past, — other than my conviction that it is or ought to be so, — a conviction which is sometimes strong and at other times weak, as in the experience of many others.

I have seen many human consciousnesses put together, like my own. They were at one time represented by the unconscious life of *ova*. By and by they got sense, intellect, will, conscience, experience.

But I have seen many consciousnesses taken to pieces also; they lost the senses to a great extent; the intellect and of course the conscience with the will were enfeebled,

almost lost, and the experiences of life so erased that the wife forgot her husband, the mother her children.

The natural conclusion would be that this gradual decay ends in extinction. The question might well be asked, whether the individuality, so nearly lost in this world, is likely to be restored by the destruction of the organism. I *hope* and *trust* that my feelings are right, which tell me that this world demands a complement.

If the evidence of the New Testament is a *proof* (and not merely a probability of a certain value, variously estimated by different honest persons), there is no need of asking the question.

One thing seems to me clear, — that if the future life is to be for the bulk of mankind what the larger part of our pulpits teach, namely, a condition of hopeless woe, there is no reason why we should wish to have proof of another life.

The more I consider the doctrine of eternal punishment, the more it seems to me a heathen invention, which has found its way into Christianity, and entirely inconsistent with the paternal character attributed to the Deity. (We must carry to any future sphere the characters we form here; and these must influence, if they do not determine, our condition. Yet it seems in accordance with the paternal principle that any punishment should be reformatory and not vindictive.)

One thing is certain: it is impossible to *disprove* the reality of a future life, and we have all a right to cherish the hope that we may live again under more favorable circumstances, and be able to account for these preliminary arrangements, which, as a finality, are certainly unsatisfactory.[1]

[1] Holmes's "Life and Letters," I. p. 288.

It must be remembered that Holmes was constitutionally conservative, and the element of whim came in to make him even more so in appearance than he actually was. His favorite character, Little Boston, was a fanciful exaggeration of his own innocent cockneyism. In his day Beacon Street was still precisely what he called it, "The sunny street that holds the sifted few," and young men and maidens in good society carried on their courtships while walking round the Common or down the long path or on the mill-dam. "Whom does Arabella walk with now?" was a question occasionally heard in careful circles of maiden aunts. Holmes did not really desire any larger social arena, and moreover got all the rural life he wanted through his summer visits in Pittsfield. He was conservative on the slavery question until the Civil War, hated quacks and fanatics with honest and unflinching hostility, and it was only the revolt of his kindly nature against Calvinism which threw him finally on the side of progress. The Saturday Club with all its attractions did not lead him in that direction. It brought together an agreeable set of cultivated men, but none of

the more strenuous reformers of its day, however brilliant, except Emerson and occasionally Sumner and Howe. Edmund Quincy and James Freeman Clarke were not admitted until 1875, after the abolition of slavery. Garrison, Parker, Phillips, Alcott, Wasson, Weiss, and William Henry Channing were never members of the Saturday Club and probably never could have been elected to it; but they were to be looked for every month at the Radical Club, — afterward called the Chestnut Street Club, — which certainly rivalled the Saturday in brilliancy in those days, while it certainly could not be said of it, as Dr. Holmes said of the Saturday, "We do nothing but tell our old stories; we never discuss anything." Possibly all such gatherings tend to be somewhat more conspicuous in retrospect as time goes on; men recall the bright sayings and forget the occasional gaps of triviality or dulness. I remember when Fields, on once inviting me to dine with him at the Saturday Club, during a visit to Boston, cautioned me not to expect too much; "We are sometimes stupid," he said. I know that in thinking of the Atlantic

Club I still recall with fatigue the propensity which Lowell shared with Holmes for discussing theology. After all, the Five Points of Calvinism have this in common with measles or the whooping-cough: they are interesting to those who are liable to them or have got over them; but to those who have never gone through them they are rather tiresome subjects. As to the Radical Club, Holmes in later years made an address there himself on one of his speculative themes.

Perhaps, indeed, Holmes's talk was not to be seen at best advantage in his pet clubs where he sat as undisputed autocrat, while in the more familiar intercourse of common life his conversational fertility can hardly be exaggerated, and was, perhaps, never surpassed even by Sydney Smith. There was certainly no one in his day with whom it was so impossible to spend five minutes without bringing away something worth recalling. This has descended, it is said, to his son Judge Holmes, of whom a young law student once said to me that, being allowed a seat in the Judge's office, he chose the seat next to him in order

to get the cream of the thoughts which had invariably come to his chief during his morning walk across Boston Common. With the father it was the same, his mental activities being wholly impulsive and yet ever ready to take hold of every point offered by another. If nothing offered, the jest ripened in his own head, and blossomed by itself. I remember that one morning, during a brief call at Fields's office, Holmes came in on an errand, having a book done up in paper under his arm, and as he was going out suddenly turned and said: "I have here a most wonderful book. It is worth in money value any other book in Boston. In fact it is worth a whole library. If it could be properly edited and illustrated, as I would do it, it would be worth the whole public library put together." Nodding to us authoritatively, he shut the door, leaving us looking at one another, too bewildered for conjecture. Presently the door opened again quietly, and Dr. Holmes put in his head, his face bubbling over with amusement, and said: "Oh, I forgot to tell you what book this is. It is Nat Thayer's check-book." Then he shut the door. The

gentleman thus designated was understood at that time to be the richest man in Boston.

With a mind in which unexpected bubbles of fun were thus liable to come to the surface at any moment, there was naturally combined a temperament which not only took delight in them but in all the cheerful side of human existence. Comparing the temperaments of these eminent friends, Holmes might be designated as sunny, Longfellow as equable, and Lowell as variable and given to extremes. Holmes had, moreover, fewer domestic sorrows than his two friends, but on the other hand had by reason of his greater longevity the hardest trial of old age, in the sense of finding himself alone through the departures of his contemporaries. He did not lament over this, but there is abundant evidence that he felt it deeply. Few men have had in their later years such an intoxicating ovation as was awarded to him in England at the age of seventy-seven; but he wrote five years after to Whittier: "We are lonely, very lonely, in these last years. . . . We were on deck together as we began the voyage of life two

generations ago. A whole generation passed, and the succeeding one found us in the cabin with a goodly number of coevals. Then the craft which held us began going to pieces, until a few of us were left on the raft pieced together of its fragments. And now the raft has at last parted, and you and I are left clinging to the solitary spar, which is all that still remains afloat of the sunken vessel."[1]

He died on October 7th, 1894.

[1] Holmes's "Life and Letters," II. p. 315.

IV

LONGFELLOW

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LONGFELLOW

Unlike Holmes and Lowell, Longfellow was not born in a college town; but he went at fifteen to live in one, and that a very characteristic one, not differing essentially in its traditions from that in which he spent his later life, although all the academic associations at Bowdoin College were on a smaller scale than at Harvard. As Fluellen says in "Henry V." that there is a river in Macedon and a river in Monmouth and there are salmons in both, so it may be said that Brunswick has somewhat the same relation to the Androscoggin that Cambridge bears to the Charles; and the open sea is within a few hours' sail from each, so that there were, or might have been at some period, salmons in both. Each town had then broad country roads shaded by elm trees, and each still has large colonial houses, in two at least of which — both yet standing — Longfellow

lived at different times. In each town the college buildings were of red brick, — "the Muses' factories" as Lowell says, — and although both the room where Longfellow lodged at Brunswick and that in which he taught have since been destroyed by fire, yet the primitive aspect can be easily restored by the imagination. In one thing Brunswick had and has the advantage over Cambridge — in possessing a tract of many acres of fine old pine woods, on whose intersecting paths it is easy at this day for the fancy to represent Hawthorne and Longfellow as coming and going; and in having also, not far off, the wild and hilly region described in Hawthorne's "Fanshawe."

Bowdoin College cherishes with affection its few memorials of Longfellow, yet I found none of these more noticeable on a recent visit than the printed list of students in 1821 — the number being only 114 in all and given on a single page, yet including an unusually large proportion of men nationally famous. The little college, then only twenty years old, contributed to literature, out of its undergraduates, Long-

fellow and Hawthorne, then spelled Hathorne; to public life, Franklin Pierce, President of the United States; to the medical profession, Drs. Luther V. Bell and D. Humphreys Storer; and to the Christian ministry, Calvin E. Stowe and George B. Cheever. The corresponding four classes at Harvard had more than twice the number of students (252), but I do not think the proportion of men of national reputation was quite so large, although the Harvard list included Admiral C. H. Davis, Charles Francis Adams, Frederick Henry Hedge, George Ripley, and Sears Cook Walker.

It is interesting also to note the records of the library kept in Longfellow's clear and delicate hand; the old copy of Horace, which had previously belonged to Calvin E. Stowe, and out of which Longfellow made the translation which practically determined his career, since its merit led to his selection by the Faculty as the future Professor of Modern Languages in the college. It is curious also to observe on the College Commencement "Order of Performances" that the subject originally

assigned to him, "The Life and Writings of Chatterton," was corrected by pen and ink after printing, and the title "Our Native Writers" substituted. We know from his own letters that he wrote the paper on Chatterton two months before it was due, but that at the suggestion of his father, then in Congress at Washington, he substituted the other, apparently at the last moment. The oration itself may be found printed in the Boston *Every Other Saturday* of April 12, 1884.

Cambridge began to exert an influence on Longfellow before he reached it, for while his father urged him to study law — a Moloch which he like Holmes and Lowell barely escaped — he stipulated that, in this case, he should first have some post-graduate study at Harvard in general literature. This was his announcement of his plans to his father (December 5, 1824): "I want to spend one year at Cambridge for the purpose of reading history and of becoming familiar with the best authors in polite literature; whilst at the same time I can be acquiring a knowledge of the Italian language, without an acquaintance with which I shall

be shut out from one of the most beautiful departments of letters. The French I mean to understand pretty thoroughly before I leave college. After leaving Cambridge I would attach myself to some literary periodical publication, by which I could maintain myself and still enjoy the advantages of reading. Now I do not think that there is anything visionary or chimerical in my plan thus far. The fact is — and I will not disguise it in the least, for I think I ought not — the fact is, I most eagerly aspire after future eminence in literature: my whole soul burns most ardently for it, and every earthly thought centres in it." Writing nearly a month later (December 31), he says to his father, "Let me reside one year at Cambridge, let me study belles-lettres, and after that time it will not require a spirit of prophecy to predict with some kind of certainty the kind of figure I could make in the literary world." A wise letter from his father urges that "there is not wealth enough in this country to afford encouragement and patronage to merely literary men," but consents to his son's going to Cambridge for a year at the curiously moderate expense of $184. Mean-

while the plan of sending him to Europe to prepare for his college professorship superseded all this, and he left home in April, 1826, for New York, where he was to take the ship for Paris. On the way he dined with George Ticknor in Boston, heard Dr. Channing preach, met Rev. Charles Lowell, and on Monday went to Cambridge and saw President Kirkland. At Northampton he met Messrs. George Bancroft and J. G. Cogswell, who gave him letters to European notabilities and advised a year's residence at Göttingen. His mother wrote to him, "I will not say how much we miss your elastic step, your cheerful voice, your melodious flute." His father wrote, "In all your ways remember the God by whose power you were created, by whose goodness you are sustained and protected." It all seems more like the anxious departure from home of one of Goethe's or Jean Paul's youthful wanderers than like the easy manner in which a modern student buys his ticket and goes on board ship. Yet it was for Longfellow the parting of the ways and the beginning of a new life. The European letters of previous American student-travellers,

and especially those of Ticknor, Everett, and Cogswell, as lately published in the *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*,[1] show what a new world then opened upon young American students in Europe. Longfellow journeyed in Spain with Lieutenant Alexander Slidell (afterward Mackenzie), who says of him in his book, "A Year in Spain": "He was just from college, full of all the ardent feeling excited by classical pursuits, with health unbroken, hope that was a stranger to disappointment, curiosity that had never yet been fed to satiety. Then he had sunny locks, a fresh complexion, and a clear blue eye, all indications of a joyous temperament." Longfellow enjoyed the cheery society of Washington Irving, whom he describes as "one of those men who put you at ease with them in a moment."

He thus states the sum of his European work, in writing to his father: —

"I feel no kind of anxiety for my future prospects. Thanks to your goodness, I have received a good education. I know you cannot be dissatisfied with the progress I have

[1] September, 1897.

made in my studies. I speak honestly, not boastingly. With the French and Spanish languages I am familiarly conversant, so as to speak them correctly, and write them with as much ease and fluency as I do the English. The Portuguese I read without difficulty. And with regard to my proficiency in the Italian, I have only to say that all at the hotel where I lodge took me for an Italian until I told them I was an American.

"I intend leaving Venice in a few days for Dresden. I do not wish to return without competent knowledge of German; and all that I can do to acquire it shall be done. The time is short, but I hope to turn it to good advantage."

It is to be noticed that in this same letter he declines with some indignation the suggestion of the Bowdoin College Faculty to change his professorship to a tutorship. It was a change suggested only because of their want of funds, but he emphasized his refusal. It is interesting to know that he wrote to Carey and Lea, the Philadelphia publishers, giving a list of New England sketches which he had

planned, but only one of which ever appeared, including studies of the Indians, of the White Mountains, and of Acadie. His mind thus seems to have worked curiously in line with Hawthorne as to themes; and this, like his selection of a theme for his Commencement Oration, shows that Margaret Fuller was too hasty in imputing to him an exotic quality, from the accident that his first prose books were on foreign subjects. Both "Evangeline" and "Hiawatha" already existed, by implication, in the titles of these early sketches.

He was three years abroad and wrote to his sister, "My poetic career is finished." On his return in 1829 he became Professor in Bowdoin College. He still wrote, "If ever I publish a volume of poetry it will be many years first" — it being actually nine. He published text-books and wrote "Outre-Mer," the first sketches for which originally appeared in the *New England Magazine*. In 1831 he was married to the daughter of the Hon. Barrett Potter of Portland, Mary Storer Potter. She came of a family noted for a beauty which is prolonged into the present generation, and

even the inadequate portrait of her, which is in their possession, vindicates the tradition. It shows her to have had dark hair — dressed high, in the fashion of those times — with deep blue eyes, a sweet expression, and dignified though dainty bearing. Her mental training had some peculiar characteristics, owing to the traditions of the period and the whims of her father, who believed Latin and Greek to be unsuitable for girls, while he was willing to encourage mathematics to any extent, and to some degree modern languages. Her papers, many of which are in my possession, include several calculations of eclipses, probably as book-problems only; and they also indicate an excellent range of English reading, both in prose and verse. Here and there occur among them translations by Longfellow from Spanish or Italian, in his own clear handwriting. Nothing brings back to me the youthful poet like these interspersed translations: they show her as already the partner of his literary interests, and it seems but a step from this youthful companionship to the later memories of "Footsteps of Angels."

And with them that being beauteous,
Who unto my youth was given,
More than all things else to love me,
And is now a saint in heaven.

That she helped him directly as well as indirectly is plain from the fact that in his Bowdoin lectures, which exist only in manuscript, there are illustrative passages in her handwriting. This poetic companionship went on in a delightful house still standing in Brunswick, with its sunny windows looking out on a lawn with large pine trees, of which spot he writes (June 23, 1831) that he could almost fancy himself in Spain from the softness of the air; that the shadow of the honeysuckle lies upon the floor "like a figure in the carpet," and that the humming-birds have their nests in the honeysuckle — as is still the case. Here he lived and worked hard, rising day after day at five in the morning, as his diary shows; but all his plans were again changed when in 1834 he received an invitation to be the successor of George Ticknor as Smith Professor of Modern Languages in Harvard University, opportunity being given, by special arrange-

ment with Mr. Ticknor, of eighteen months of added study in Europe. This seemed the more appropriate, as Mr. Ticknor's fine and scholarly career had always been an object of admiration to his young successor; and the manuscript of Longfellow's Inaugural Address as Professor at Bowdoin College, carefully preserved in the library of that institution, suggests Mr. Ticknor so strongly, both in style and handwriting, that it might almost pass for his. In 1835 he sailed for Europe, with his wife, having first arranged for the publication of "Outre-Mer." Mrs. Longfellow died at Rotterdam, on November 26 of that year, in childbirth.

I have dwelt thus fully on this ante-Cantabrigian life of Longfellow, because it really prepared the way for the other, being essentially an academical life on a small scale and testing the same qualities afterward manifested in a somewhat larger sphere. Longfellow's studies and successes at Brunswick were what secured his transplantation to Cambridge; and even his growing reputation as a poet was extended to the neighborhood of

Boston by the repetition at Harvard College, in 1833, of the poem delivered by him in the previous autumn before the Bowdoin Chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa. At Cambridge the poem was, for some reason, given first in order, and Edward Everett, the orator, afterward announced that his subject also was "Education," and that he was "but a follower in the field where the flashing sickle had already passed." It is remembered that when the young professor afterward came to Harvard some of the Cambridge ladies were wont to speak of him as the Flashing Sickle.

Longfellow's first residence in Cambridge (1836) was in the large house now known as the Foxcroft House and maintained by the University as a students' boarding-house. Here he formed an intimacy with Professor Felton, "heartiest of Greek professors," as Dickens called him; and the circle was often enlarged by the society of Charles Sumner, then librarian of the Law School; of George Stillman Hillard, then a young lawyer; and of Henry Russell Cleveland, an eminent scholar and

teacher, then residing at Pine Bank on Jamaica Pond. These five were known among themselves as the Five of Clubs; and came to be known by a too censorious public as "The Mutual Admiration Club," and this much earlier than the application of the same name to the *Atlantic* contributors. It is, doubtless, the name instinctively applied by the world outside to those little circles of men of letters which are as inevitable and as innocent as similar companionships among artists or inventors. In this case, however, it was so emphatically insisted upon that, when Felton had praised, in the *Christian Examiner*, an article by Longfellow, some unknown hand indorsed the page at the Athenæum Library, "Insured at the Mutual."

In 1837 Mr. Longfellow removed to the house of Mrs. Craigie, that ancient and picturesque widow described by Lowell in his "Fireside Travels," who sat at the window black-garbed and white-capped, reading Voltaire; and who forbade the destruction of the canker-worms on the ground that "we are all worms, worms." It is true, as Lowell

sternly says, that "the canker years had left her leafless too;" but this could not be said of Miss Sally Lowell, a maiden lady who later became a resident of the large building, in friendly juxtaposition with Longfellow, and whose perpetual and sparrow-like vivacity made her a companion of the young, as I can testify, to her latest years. The Craigie House was then more beautiful than now, by reason of the great elm trees — "ten magnificent elms," as he wrote in 1839,[1] — which reached the grass with their pendent boughs and have since perished of sheer old age. Longfellow however greatly improved the appearance of the grounds by the low-fenced terrace which is so appropriate that one finds it hard not to carry that appendage back to the time of Washington.

Craigie House has played a much larger part in Cambridge tradition than the houses which were also the birthplaces of Holmes and Lowell. Those who have spent summers in Cambridge within the last ten years must know well — such is certainly my own experience —

[1] "Life of Longfellow" by his brother, I. p. 325.

that twice as many strangers inquired the way to Craigie House as to Elmwood and "the gambrel-roofed house" put together; and though this might be partly due to associations with Washington, yet I am confident that these made but a small portion of the whole interest in the abode. I have seldom felt so keenly the real worth of popular fame as when one summer day, in passing Craigie House, I found a young man of somewhat rustic appearance and sunburned look eagerly questioning two other youths as to the whereabouts of the "Spreading Chestnut Tree" mentioned in "The Village Blacksmith." Coming to their relief I explained to him that the tree in question was never at that point and had now vanished altogether, but offered to show him where it once was, and where the blacksmith shop of Dexter Pratt had stood. Walking down the street with him, I won his confidence by telling him that I was one of the Cambridge-bred boys who had "looked in at the open door"; that the blacksmith's wife, Rowena Pratt, had been my nurse, and that I had, in later life, heard

her daughter sing. He told me in return that he was a young Irishman, arrived in this country but the day before, that the first poetry he had ever quite learned by heart at school was "The Village Blacksmith," and that he had resolved that his first act on reaching Boston should be to visit the Chestnut Tree. "This," I said to myself, "is fame."

But to Longfellow's modest and social nature, personal companionship was nearer than fame, and the admiring curiosity of strangers was less a satisfaction than to make his own house the centre, as he did, for what was best in Cambridge. In this he went far beyond his two eminent contemporaries, — Holmes, of course, having in maturity no home in Cambridge, while Lowell's house was less easily accessible, and the delicate health of his wife made their home less of a resort for others. Longfellow's diaries, so admirably edited by his brother, offer a constant record of visitors more or less transient. This was especially true after his second marriage; before this in 1838 he writes that he dines at five or six, "generally

in Boston." He then continues, "In the evening I walk on the Common with Hillard, or alone; then go back to Cambridge on foot. If not very late, I sit an hour with Felton or Sparks. For nearly two years I have not studied at night, save now and then. Most of the time am alone; smoke a good deal; wear a broad-brimmed black hat, black frock-coat, a black cane. Molest no one. Dine out frequently. In winter go much into Boston society."

This mention of the broad-brimmed black hat — now incredible — suggests the criticisms, still remembered in Cambridge, which were made upon Mr. Longfellow's youthful taste for becoming costume. He was undoubtedly thinking of himself when in "Hyperion" he made the Baron say to Paul Fleming, "The ladies already begin to call you Wilhelm Meister, and they say that your gloves are a shade too light for a strictly virtuous man." He perhaps also thought of it when he wrote to Sumner, then in Europe, "If you have any tendency to 'curl your hair and wear gloves,' like Edgar in 'Lear,' do it before your return." Even Mrs.

Craigie, it is said, thought that he had "somewhat too gay a look."[1] He was viewed, it must be remembered, against a background of Harvard professors, whose costume did not in those days — if even now it does — savor of splendor. It was also a period of much gayer waistcoats than now and of great amplitude of cravats. The criticism of Longfellow's own toilet had an especial biographical interest in the peculiar wrath inspired among his friends by Margaret Fuller's phrase "a dandy Pindar" as applied to his picture in the first illustrated edition of his works; for although the phrase was perfectly applicable to the engraving, it was generally regarded, and possibly with some shade of justice, as being a personal hit at the poet himself. It is one inconvenience of great amiability and moderation of character, that a man of this type usually has friends more combative, who wish to fight his battles for him. Lowell in particular was quite ready to take up the cause of his calmer friend, and thus perpetuate some antagonisms which would have fallen harmlessly aside from the

[1] "Life of Longfellow" by his brother, I. p. 246.

smooth surface of Longfellow's more even temperament.

Socially, also, it is to be remembered that Boston as well as Cambridge was then a much smaller community than now; and that the good old habit not merely of dinner parties but of mixed evening entertainments prevailed more fully. The somewhat indolent practice of afternoon teas had not then displaced the larger evening receptions, where older and younger guests met, and those who wished played whist or "Boston," while others danced. The same was true in a degree of Cambridge society also. Longfellow's marriage in June, 1843, to Miss Frances Appleton, daughter of the Hon. Nathan Appleton of Boston, fixed him in his social relations, aided by the dignity and beauty of a charming woman. Craigie House became his own, and was perhaps more than any other dwelling in Cambridge the centre of a generous hospitality. It is evident from his published diaries that he had many foreign visitors, of whom he sometimes complains that they were more ready to give information about his country than to receive

it, and his diaries form an imperfect record of the constant stream of kindnesses that flowed from his generous heart.

It was the unusual experience of Mr. Longfellow to be best known by his long poems, especially by "Hiawatha" and "Evangeline," both of which were experiments somewhat distrusted by his intimate friends and both of which met with a good deal of criticism, especially in respect of metre, after their publication. Their success was the more remarkable, as poems on Indian subjects had up to that time been uniformly unsuccessful in America, and those on historical themes had not fared much better. It was, however, his short poems which first made him known, and these derived strength from their simplicity and from being near to the popular heart. It has latterly been somewhat the fashion to underrate them, but those who recall the time when they appeared will testify to the warmth with which they were received, and will admit that Longfellow's biographer does not speak too strongly when he says of the "Psalm of Life" in particular: "It was copied far and wide. Young men read it with delight;

their hearts were stirred by it as by a bugle summons. . . . They did not stop to ask critically whether or not it passed the line which separates poetry from preaching, or whether its didactic merit was a poetic defect. It was enough that it inspired them and enlarged their lives." Professors even of chemistry read it to their classes. Charles Sumner testified that he had a young classmate who was prevented from suicide by reading it. General Meredith Read tells a story of an old French lawyer whose mind was saved during the siege of Paris by translating it.[1] Scarcely less need be said of that other psalm called "The Light of Stars"; and the present writer at least can vividly testify what it was to him and his friends. It is worth remembering that the English reviewers of the day spoke of what they called the peculiarly "American tone" of such poems as these, counteracting the pessimism of older countries. Placed beside the inexhaustible depth of Browning, the perfect execution of Tennyson, the absorbing passion of Rossetti, or the wonderful melodies of Swinburne, it is now easy to recog-

[1] "Life of Longfellow" by his brother, I. p. 271.

nize that such poetry as Longfellow's had its limitations, but it represented one whole side of life, and that in a way which undoubtedly gave him for many years the widest poetic audience in the English-speaking world. Only last year I saw a volume of popular poetry, published for wide circulation in England, in which there were more poems by Longfellow than by all English-born poets put together. The translations of these poems into fifteen languages tells the same story. The "Psalm of Life," for instance, has been rendered into Sanskrit, Chinese, and Marathi. Mere popularity is doubtless a very secondary test, but where it shows that the quality of poems has entered into the people's life, it is not an element to be ignored.

It is also to be noticed that Longfellow was to all Americans, at that time, one of the two prime influences through which the treasures of German literature, and especially of German romance, were opened to English readers. To this day nine-tenths of the Americans who visit Nuremberg and Heidelberg do it under the associations they have gained from Longfellow's prose or verse, and such travel-

lers find in the latter city a German edition of the English text of "Hyperion" which they are wont to purchase at once and take with them to the castle. They visit every spot which has associations there, and I remember how indignant I was on finding the great tree described as waving over the Gesprengte Thurm was no longer there, but had shared the fate of the Chestnut Tree in "The Village Blacksmith." Poets' trees, I had supposed, must be as immortal as their personal laurels.

Professor Longfellow's diaries have been so frankly and sincerely edited by his brother that we see the personality of the man as in a glass, and also receive a vivid impression of his circle of companionship. It is a curious fact that while the details in this respect were criticised by London journals as being too profuse, — inasmuch as several persons were mentioned whose names were previously unfamiliar to those particular critics, — they were criticised on the other hand in Germany as not sufficiently minute for the more thorough and laborious German mind. In comparing these self-revelations with those given in the

letters of Holmes and Lowell, one is struck with their far less brilliant and scintillating tone and, on the other hand, with their comparative evenness and equanimity. Never by any combination of circumstances do they exhibit jealousy, suspicion, or a petty solicitude for personal fame, though they may be said, on the other hand, sometimes to verge upon the trite or even commonplace. Yet they often have most felicitous touches, as where, for instance, Longfellow speaks of "The old dull pain that runs through all of Hawthorne's writings," or describes Captain —— as "a fresh-looking, mellow, drum-voiced Englishman," and adds "we all look baked and dried in comparison;" or suggests that "a charming essay might be written on the Perfect Stranger," meaning the man who is always writing to you "to turn his grindstone."[1]

He sometimes gets very tired of people who send him large folios of poetry for "his private judgment," and once meditates on "the great importance it is to a literary man to remain unknown till he gets his work fairly done."

[1] "Life of Longfellow" by his brother, II. pp. 351, 362, 379.

People moreover wrote to him to ask whether the youth in "Excelsior" died before he crossed the path; whether the poet's feelings were in sympathy with his thought when he wrote the poem of "The Bridge"; also who Evangeline was, to what country she belonged, and the place of her birth — a request which, his brother tells us, came in the same words one day from two different towns. In declining the request of a schoolgirl, he reports that he "tried to say *no* so softly that she would think it better than *yes*." One correspondent wished for the details of his life, and added, "try and fill a foolscap sheet." He wrote to one lady (December 18, 1855), "I have sixty unanswered letters lying on my desk before me;" and I myself saw, shortly before his death, a pile even larger than this, which had arrived that day from the pupils in the high schools of one western city. It must be owned that though his patience held out through all these trials, his strictness of judgment did not; and that he, like all elderly poets, — Holmes and Whittier in particular, — found it very much easier to praise than blame.

The late Mr. John S. Dwight, the leading musical critic of Boston, used to say that Longfellow's influence on the standard of music in that city had been pernicious, inasmuch as he was always ready to head an invitation addressed to any new performer, however mediocre, who was asked to favor the public with a concert. In a thousand ways these diaries give indirect evidence of kindness, and he once said of an unworthy hanger-on, when reproached with being wheedled, "Who will be kind to him if I am not?" There are few finer instances in literature of generosity to an assailant than when he wrote to Poe after the latter's trivial and scurrilous attacks, this answer to a propitiatory letter: "You are mistaken in supposing that you are 'not favorably known to me.' On the contrary, all that I have read from your pen has inspired me with a high idea; and I think you are destined to stand among the first romance writers of the country, if such be your aim."[1] This was written May 19, 1841, when Poe's "Tales of the Grotesque

[1] "Life of Longfellow" by his brother, I. p. 377.

and the Arabesque" were published, but almost unknown.

He fared on the whole mildly with the critics, and the most serious charge made against him was, perhaps, that recorded by him as follows (February 6, 1846): "The Anti-Slavery papers attack me for leaving out the slavery poems in the illustrated edition. They are rather savage." This referred to an edition published by Hart in Philadelphia, November, 1845, and the omission was due, his brother thinks, to "a too good-natured concession to the expressed wish of the publishers." Several other instances of this good nature had occurred on the part of others, and the abolitionists could not easily ignore it. It is to be remembered, on the other hand, that these poems were all included in the cheap edition published by Harper but a few months later (February, 1846), and that Longfellow might justly regard this as the one destined to reach the people. It is also to be recognized that these poems had been written when entirely alone, on a homeward voyage from Europe; that he did not personally know any of the abolitionists, and perhaps did not quite realize

how important these productions were or how valuable was his example to the struggling band who were fighting slavery. Since Hart undertook at his own risk what was then regarded as an *édition de luxe*, the poet may have felt that the daring publisher had a right to make his own selection. It must be remembered that Longfellow was nothing if not modest, and that his career of great success was really only beginning. The authors who had then made such successes were, as usual, those now forgotten, a good type of these being a certain Professor J. H. Ingraham of whom Longfellow justly says, "I think he may say that he writes the worst novels ever written by anybody," though he got twelve hundred dollars for each of them, and wrote twenty a year. As time went on, Longfellow's poems were financially more profitable than some which were profounder, as those of Emerson; and probably no American poet has been on the whole so well repaid in money, popularity, and in at least temporary fame. How permanent is to be the fame of any poet can never be predicted by his contemporaries.

He undoubtedly shared with Carlyle, whose miscellaneous essays were first collected and edited during this period by Charles Stearns Wheeler, another Cambridge instructor, the function of interpreting Germany to America. This he did first in "Hyperion," and continued to do in his "Poets and Poetry of Europe" and his numerous translations. Few men, I suspect, have ever surpassed him as what may be called natural translators, proving it possible to produce versions that are both flexible and literal, sacrificing neither literalness to grace nor grace to literalness. Perhaps it could not actually be said of any of his translations, as has been justly said by critics of Mrs. Sarah Austin's exquisite rendering "Many a Year is in its Grave," that it was better than the original, yet he sometimes came very near to this, and his widely recognized fame in this respect was of great value to the University. His influence was always thrown, of course, on the side of the elective system, yet he often writes in his diary such expressions as this: "It is pleasant to teach in college, yet it has grown wearisome to me." "Ah, would that I had not

all this college tackle hanging round me." "A day of hard work. Six hours in the recitation room — like a schoolmaster! It is pleasant enough when the mind gets engaged in it, but — Art is long and life is short." Then there are such summaries of a year as this: "How barren of all poetic production, and even prose production, this last year has been! For 1853 I have absolutely nothing to show. Really, there has been nothing but the college work. The family absorbs half the time; and letters and visits take out a huge cantle." Lowell's letters are full of similar complaints, more impulsively made, and relieved by countless jokes against himself. The difference was that Longfellow's more even temperament made him more methodical and orderly, and also more chary of self-expression, so that although he might be as much bored with his work, his pupils would find it out less readily. Indeed, Lowell's pupils discovered it easily enough. He yawned occasionally on entering the room, an act of which the ever courteous Longfellow would have been incapable, as he would also of a certain cynical tone by which Lowell some-

times relieved himself. Certainly in my time — ten years before the period of Longfellow's complaints mentioned above — there were no visible indications of weariness on his part; in fact, he would have generally been pronounced the least sleepy of our professors.

I had the good fortune to study French under him, not in a general recitation room, but in what was called the Corporation Room, where we sat round a long table as if guests at his board. His lectures, which were to us most interesting, were sometimes criticised as too flowery by our elders, who had perhaps been accustomed to gather only dried fruit; and I remember how he fixed in our memories the vivid moral of any French books that happened to be provided with that appendage, as for instance "Le Peau de Chagrin" of Balzac. I remember also with delight when a printer's boy once came in and laid down between the Professor and myself the proof-sheet of a title-page bearing the magic words "Voices of the Night." It was as if I had seen a new planet in process of making.

Longfellow was, I think, the first Harvard professor who addressed his pupils as "Mr.," a

practice now very general. I have told elsewhere how, when he undertook to address us in the evening in the college yard during what he called in his diary a "silly and boyish outbreak," — called by the students a rebellion,— he was listened to when other professors had been silenced, and this under the cry: "We will hear Professor Longfellow. He always treats us like gentlemen." He was indeed, undoubtedly, at this time, the best model of manners among all the professors, but it was sometimes felt that his courtesy had a little background of reserve, not easily surmounted. Young people demand not merely kindliness from their elders, but perhaps a little exuberance, and are sometimes as much checked by the absence of this secondary supply of cordiality as by coldness of first greeting. Professor Longfellow never was cold, but on the other hand he was never quite warm; and I sometimes thought that Professor Peirce, the mathematician, who rarely answered our greetings in the street, yet was all frankness if he happened to speak to us, was more thoroughly winning to juveniles than the uniformly courteous but more distant Longfellow.

The point where this underlying stratum of coolness came in superbly was in his feeling toward critics, who were absolutely powerless to hurt him. He rarely read their attacks, though he had a habit of preserving them; and the really outrageous assaults of Poe, for instance, fell off from him as from a marble statue. He was for the last dozen years of his life distinctly the First Citizen of Cambridge. He was always faithful to all public duties, seldom failed to vote or to contribute to all legitimate local needs, was known to sight by everybody, and when the children of Cambridge subscribed to give him an armchair from the wood of the Chestnut Tree, he laid it down as a rule that every child who wished to see the chair again should be admitted without objection; a privilege which was long used by hundreds who thronged the door to the despair of his family. He said on his seventy-fourth birthday that it seemed as if the two numerals ought to exchange places, but died after one more anniversary, on March 24, 1882, having been, as has been said, more continuously and permanently identified with the life of Cambridge than had been either of her native-born poets.

V

LOWELL

V

LOWELL

Of the three authors most widely associated with Old Cambridge, only Holmes and Lowell were born there, although its associations became a second nature to Longfellow, who was born in Maine, while that region was still a part of Massachusetts.

Lowell felt, even more thoroughly than Holmes, the influence of his Cambridge surroundings, because Holmes went to Europe for his medical training (1833) at the age of twenty-three and never afterward lived in his native town, though always near it; while Lowell was continuously a Cantabrigian, with only occasionally a few months of absence, until his first diplomatic appointment. Fredrika Bremer told him that he was the only American she had seen whose children were born in the same house with himself; and he was also of the yet smaller number who die in

the house of their birth. It would be impossible to say that the Cambridge influence entered more strongly into Lowell than into Holmes, but it was in Lowell's case less concentrated upon early years and more distributed over his life. One of his most attractive traits was his passionate love of his birthplace, and although Matthew Arnold pitied him for being obliged to return to it from London, he was really nowhere else so happy. This could not have been the case had not the residence been fortunate in itself.

Multitudes of persons now visit Elmwood every year, and there are few who do not feel its charm. Yet this affords no picture of what the region was in Lowell's day, when the whole road connecting it with "the village" was merely dotted here and there with other stately colonial houses like itself. On Mt. Auburn Street, then called "the New Road," there was no house whatever until the village was nearly reached; and even on Brattle Street the south side was houseless until the old Vassall House blocked the way. It was the region not merely, as Professor Norton says, of "pasture land or

mowing which afforded good roaming ground for schoolboys," but also one where orchards bore that rather tart fruit which schoolboys most enjoy.

Along Brattle Street the gallants of Revolutionary days had in Lowell's phrase "creaked up and down on red-heeled shoes, lifting the ceremonious three-cornered hat and offering the fugacious hospitalities of the snuff-box." The Baroness Riedesel had described their delightful society in 1780; all the families were more or less connected, and most of them had slave plantations in the West Indies. She says: "Never had I chanced upon such an agreeable situation. Seven families, who were connected with each other, partly by the ties of relationship and partly by affection, had here farms, gardens, and magnificent houses, and not far off plantations of fruit. The owners of these were in the habit of daily meeting each other in the afternoons, — now at the house of one, and now at another, and making themselves merry with music and the dance, — living in prosperity, united and happy, until, alas! this ruinous war severed them, and left all their

houses desolate, except two, the proprietors of which were also soon obliged to flee."

These seven houses were those of General William Brattle, Colonel John Vassall, Mrs. Penelope, widow of Colonel Henry Vassall, Richard Lechmere (afterward Jonathan Sewall), Judge Joseph Lee, Captain George Ruggles (afterward Thomas Fayerweather), and Lieutenant Thomas Oliver. Of their homes, the Lechmere House was that occupied by Madame Riedesel; the John Vassall House was the Craigie House, afterward owned by Longfellow, and now occupied by his eldest daughter; the Oliver House was owned by Lowell, and is now occupied by his grandchildren; the Brattle House was occupied at one time by Margaret Fuller; the Ruggles House was owned by William Wells, when Lowell went to his school, and now belongs as part owner to his grandson Williams Wells Newell, founder and editor of the *American Folk-Lore Journal.* It is now somewhat difficult for the passers-by to select these seven houses amid the multitude of more recent structures; but they all belonged distinctly to the colonial type, and six out of the seven

have, as has been seen, some literary associations. It would be impossible to find elsewhere in America, and hard to select anywhere, a series of houses in this respect so notable.[1]

It was past this row of houses that Lowell walked daily or rode on his little pony to the village post-office; and it was not possible that a child of naturally imaginative turn should escape their influence. It was too soon after the American Revolution — then only fifty years removed — for him to feel any cordial sympathy or envy for the period of hair powder and snuff-boxes; but the boy who was already immersing himself in the traditions of English poetry, had the actual form of the British occupation of New England vividly before his eyes.

Lowell may have also found, in the garrets of his father's house, such memorials of the confiscation of the estate as in the following

[1] "Mrs. Oliver was sister to Vassall, and Mrs. Vassall was sister to Oliver. The deceased father of Vassall and Mrs. Oliver was brother to Mrs. Ruggles and to the deceased husband of the widow Vassall, and the deceased mother of Vassall and Mrs. Oliver was sister to Mrs. Lechmere and Mrs. Lee. The widow Vassall was also aunt to Mr. Oliver and to John Vassall's wife." Paige's "History of Cambridge," p. 168, note.

account, kept at the height of the great Revolution:—

Dr. The estate of Thomas Oliver, late of Cambridge, Absentee, to the Committee of Correspondence of the town, for the year 1776:

For taking into possession and leasing out said estate . . .	£2.
Also for supporting a negro man belonging to said estate . .	£3.12
For collecting the personal estate .	£3.
	£8.12
Cr. By cash received as rent . .	£69.

The circumstances which led Thomas Oliver to become an "absentee" must often have been told and retold to the boy Lowell by the evening fire. On September 2, 1774, there had been a great gathering in Cambridge from all parts of Middlesex County to protest against the assumption of power by which the Governing Council of the Colony should be appointed by the crown and not by the General Court or Legislature. Several thousand men were gathered round the court-house steps, and among them rose at last two of the newly appointed King's Councillors, Judge Danforth and Judge Lee, and announced amid applause

that they had declined the appointment. The mob then marched to the house of a third of these Councillors, Lieutenant-governor Oliver, who was less pliable, but at last came forth — "a dapper little man," by contemporary testimony — and gave in his written resignation in these words, "My house at Cambridge being surrounded by about four thousand people, in compliance with their command I resign my office." Then, and not till then, the crowd dispersed. It was in this house, nearly fifty years later, that Lowell was born (Feb. 22, 1819).

Lowell's name was already familiar to me at nine years of age through the school narratives of an elder brother of mine, long since dead, whose immediate classmate he was, and all whose comrades were to me of course as gifted and eminent as the heroes of the Trojan War. My brother was large and strong, being, indeed, the "big boy" of the school, and held among the pupils the honorary title of Daddy. He protected me against my ruder schoolmates and against the "town-boys," who were sometimes combative; and I think he occasionally protected Lowell

also, who was small and slight. Lowell was not then a handsome boy, but he had very fine eyes and that Apollo look about the brow which lighted up a somewhat heavy face. He and I, with my brother and William Story, afterward eminent as a sculptor, had the happiness to be the only day scholars; for the school, although by no means one of the Dotheboys Hall type, was yet emphatically of the "Early English" style, the boys being ruled by a pretty strenuous birch during school hours, and at other times left herded together with little supervision. Story was already the intimate friend of Lowell, and rather took the lead of him, being then the Steerforth of the school, joyous, full of life, and variously accomplished. Many a time I have walked up and down what is now Brattle Street, listening reverently to the talk of these older boys, not always profitable, but sometimes most valuable. I remember, for instance, their talking over the plot of Spenser's "Faerie Queene" years before I had read it, and making it so interesting that we younger urchins soon named a nook with shady apple trees near

our bathing place on Charles River the "Bower of Blisse."

In 1834 Lowell and Story went to college, and my brother afterward to the East Indies, so I was dropped from their circle, except as a boy in a college town watches the works and ways of the students. Both Lowell and Story were popular and socially brilliant in college, but neither gave unmixed satisfaction to the Faculty. Both were of the kind who read old English plays a good deal, and of the rarer number who get some good out of them. Lowell's reputation as a wit was established in the editorship of *Harvardiana*, as Holmes's had been ten years earlier in *The Collegian*, though Lowell's contributions were mainly in prose. After entering college myself in 1837, I began to meet him as an older man in Cambridge society, where he was again eclipsed in immediate prestige by Story, than whom there has never been a more varied Admirable Crichton, at least in that little world. Story was handsome, fearless, audacious, overflowing with spirits, good at everything, — singing, acting, sketching, caricaturing. But if he was the

social leader, Lowell was perhaps the class favorite. He wrote the songs for their convivial occasions, one of which, and certainly not the most dignified, has been preserved by Dr. Hale in his "Recollections." He kept the rhymed records of the Hasty Pudding Club, but in later life requested, quite to the disapproval of the immediate members, to be permitted to cut them out of the record book, which he did. Mr. F. B. Sanborn, when he succeeded to the office of secretary of this club, read these "smooth and trivial verses," as he calls them, "with avidity and some disappointment," and thinks that Lowell may perhaps have printed some of them in *Harvardiana*. He was afterward chosen class poet, but was prevented from delivering his poem by being suspended from college at the very close of the senior year. The explanation usually given of this makes it the result of negligence in college duties, and there may very probably have been a background of this description; but the immediate cause of it, as I well remember, was an unlucky performance of his in prayer-time, perhaps more severely construed by the faculty, but doubtless simply due to that

overpowering exuberance of boyish spirits which lasted for many years with him, alternating with periods of depression. The best sketch of this little incident may be found in a letter, not before published, addressed to me by an eminent clergyman, lately deceased.

JUNE 28, 1893.

. . . I was a sophomore, and sat half a dozen seats directly behind him. He came in as usual — it was the day he had been chosen class poet, by one or two votes (I think) over my cousin John Ware — and seemed to regard the occasion as wholly complimentary to himself. His handsome face was richly suffused with the purple glow of youth, and wreathed in smiles, as he rose, — my venerable grandfather [Rev. Henry Ware, D.D.] had with trembling voice just begun the service, — and bowed, smirking right hand and left, to the surprised congregation. It was the affair of a minute: my recollection is that he was soon persuaded to sit down, and only made one more ineffectual attempt to rise. The short service — it was evening prayer, of course — went through and ended decently and in order. Presumably, "Old Quin" [President Quincy] was in his customary seat, and had a fair view of the proceedings. We soon learned that it had been dealt with quite seriously; by what seemed a hard sentence, he had been suspended till after class day. I suppose the date must have been March or April [1838], but am not sure.

The Class Poem was afterward printed anonymously, to which fact, perhaps, may be partly due its present scarcity and high price. It will always have an interest, not merely as Lowell's first serious poetic effort, but as indicating that curious conservatism of his mind — far beyond his father's — which led him to speak with aversion both of Emerson and of the abolitionists, afterward his friends. It gave him, however, a distinct feeling of having tried his wings in song, and of being destined thenceforth to that realm. It was a year or two after this that my elder brother, having lately returned from Calcutta, and having gone promptly to spend an evening with his old friend, came home with an astounding bit of information. "Jimmie Lowell," he said, — this being his friend's usual appellation in those days, — "thinks he is going to be a poet." The announcement was received by my elders in the family with some disapproval. Cambridge had produced one poet in Oliver Wendell Holmes, but he was also a reputable physician, and relied at that time far more upon his medical than his literary reputation; but Lowell was

not yet even a lawyer; and for a poet pure and simple the world of our small academic village seemed to hold no opening. Nevertheless the announcement was heard with delight by one faithful and trusting auditor, who took the young bard at his own valuation. It never seems improbable to a boy that any one of his elder schoolmates should turn out a phœnix. That this purpose of a poetic career was then distinctly formed, I learned from Lowell himself, who told me that he planned at that time a regular study of the laws of English verse, mentioning to me several of his favorite manuals, as Sidney's "Defence of Poesie," and Puttenham's "Art of English Poesie." For some reason not known to me, Lowell was accredited to Boston in the Harvard catalogues during his senior year and his three years of study in the Law School, but it is probable that his father then resided in Boston, while his elder brother, Charles Russell Lowell, occupied Elmwood.

The great and even controlling influence exercised upon Lowell from this time by his betrothed, Maria White, who afterward became his wife, is well known, and the simplicity of

their daily life is well portrayed in the following extracts from a sort of diary communicated by Lowell about the year 1849 to his friend, Charles F. Briggs, of New York, who then edited *Holden's Magazine*. By a letter from Briggs to R. W. Griswold[1] it would appear that he was in charge of it in January, 1850, which must have been about the time of this letter. There is not, I think, in all Mr. Norton's delightful collection of Lowell's correspondence anything quite so thoroughly local, or giving so close a glimpse of "Old Cambridge." The editor's preface is as follows: —

"A Pepysian Letter. — Just as we had taken up our pen to go on with our topics, we received a letter from a Down East correspondent, so full of Pepysian anecdote, provincial gossip, and humane satire, that we cannot resist the temptation to overstep all the bounds of delicacy and give it to the world entire. Why should we selfishly wrap in our napkin such a piece of enjoyable good nature as this? By the way, we might as well give warning to our sev-

[1] "Letters of R. W. Griswold," p. 257.

eral private correspondents that, if they will write us such capital letters, they must not think of falling out with us if we do put them in print. We have conscientious scruples about keeping for our own enjoyment anything which we know would give pleasure to others. We have taken the liberty to erase the names because they are those of people who are too well known to allow of any other kind of liberties being taken with them."

Then follows the letter.

"The keeper of the station near us is a Mr. S., father of a wonderful boy of whom you may have seen notices. He is an excellent specimen of the Yankee, civil, intelligent, able to write a good account of Secretary C. [Collamer] in our village newspaper, nasal enough, has his own opinions on men and books — opinions on a far higher plane than common. He is from Vermont, knows P.'s [Powers] family 'wal,' and thus confuted to me one day a story he had seen translated from the Italian, to the effect that P. was born 'in the little hamlet of Woodstock, inhabited altogether by herdsmen and shepherds.' 'Why,' said he, 'I lived

within a stone's chuck o' the haouse he wuz born in. Knew his uncle Dr. P., wal. Still livin'. There's five ministers o' the gospil, twelve doctors, and seventeen liars (lawyers) these I know certin, and I guess there's much's forty piano fortes there, too.' Not a bad scale of civilization, this, though new to me. What I was going to tell, though, was something that took place this morning. He is a reader of — especially *quoad* the — —, which refresh him hugely, and always has something to say when he sees me. He is amazingly proud of his son, (a weakness you and I could pardon were it a daughter) and properly so, for the boy is not like other mathematical prodigies, but has great parts in other respects. This morning he showed me a calculation of the boy's, with regard to the orbit of some comet or other, covering many sheets of paper wafered together — about eight feet of it in all.

"M. [Maria Lowell] — 'He is fifteen years old?'

"S. — 'No, ma'am, he ain't but *jest* gut into his fourteenth year.'

"M. — 'When did he do this?'

"S. — (You see it is a matter of pride with the father to keep him young. Every year subtracts so much from his claim to prodigyship. Accordingly the 'jest' in the last sentence was prolonged thus — '*je-e-e-st*' — to express that he had barely reached fourteen, and that somehow he ought to have kept thirteen.) 'Wal, ma'am, he might a'finished it in his thirteenth year. But he took a notion to read a book. I told him he better finish it up the night before he come fourteen, and he might ez wal's nut. But he didn't — '*twuz* (answering a look of M.'s) a pity!'

"You understand that his finishing it that night (though in fact it would have been but the gain of an hour or two) would have made a difference of a whole year in favor of the father when he told the story. A pretty little touch of nature, isn't it?

"You write me news from the great city and I send you in return *our* metropolitanisms. While I am telling stories, here is another. Said my father the other day to an old widow, one of his parish poor, 'God has not deserted you in your old age.' 'No, sir, *I have a very*

good appetite still,' thus indicating clearly that she was one of those who made a god of their belly. Yet, if she had said 'digestion,' I could have gone along with her. The Jews were always a rebellious people, yet no rebellion of theirs was ever so mischievous as that of the gastric Jews. We owe to it ill-temper and Byronic poetry — two of the greatest pests of society."

[He then proceeds to describe his habitual demeanor in Boston.]

"This letter is written diary-wise. When I left off I was at the railway station. Imagine us now safely arrived in B — [Boston]. When there, I always maintain punctiliously the character of a country gentleman. We trail along the sidewalk, stopping at all the shop windows to look at prints, caricatures, rifles, silverware, muslins, books, goldfish, toys, and what not. Perhaps I go over all the shop windows again, or I walk down to the end of Long Wharf — the only part of the city that I loved when a boy — or I walk through Ann Street, (sadly changed now, and invaded by granite blocks,) or round by Copp's Hill, where the primitive pre-revolu-

tionary B — [Boston] still persists, and where old people live who think our Independence of Britain a mistake, — or I go up to look at the new Athenæum, the library room in which is finished and is the handsomest I ever saw. Through all the varied scenes I continue to represent the country interest, — my pockets have, no doubt, been explored by the inquisitive fingers of professional gentlemen from New York over and over again. Probably they know me by this time, and look upon me as no better than a Sodom apple. Perhaps they continue their investigations from habit, as Jonathan Wild used to sound the pockets of Count La Ruse, though he knew that there was nothing in them. Then I meet M., and loading myself with her various bundles we find our way to the station again, and 'so home,' as Pepys says.

"So much for Wednesday. Thursday morning I went after some pear trees I had bought, and set them out. During the rest of the morning I employed myself in scraping trees. After dinner scraped more. After tea sit down to write my article for the *S* — [*Anti-Slavery Standard*]. Got half through a prose one,

when, just as the church bells are ringing nine o'clock, the idea of a poem strikes me. Go to work on that at once. Finish it next morning all but the few last stanzas. In the afternoon (Friday) go to C — [Cambridge, *i.e.* the village] to get one thing and another for our whist club, which meets with me to-night. Play whist till 12. J. H. [John Holmes] (who is lame) spends the night with me. Next day finish and copy my verses. Got all done just in time to prevent the mail. After dinner drove J. home. Evening, read Swift, that hog of letters, who had wit enough to know the worth of pearls, though fonder of garbage and of rooting among ordure."

[We soon come to the creation of the Town and Country Club.]

"Now it is Sunday morning and here I am with you. Since I wrote to you, the 'Town and Country Club' has been got up. Our first regular meeting is next Wednesday, (2d May,) when E. [Emerson] is to read an address. The Club is a singular agglomeration. All persons whom other folks think crazy, and who return the compliment, belong to it. It is as if all the

eccentric particles which had refused to revolve in the regular routine of the world's orbit, and had flowed off in different directions, had come together to make a planet of their own. Plenty of fine luminous matter there is, though. One thing is certain, it fitly represents the extreme *gauche*. The discussions in regard to a name were rather droll. A. [Alcott], whose orbit never, even by chance, intersects the plane of the modern earth, proposed that we should call ourselves 'Olympians.' Upon this I suggested to W. H. C. [Channing] who sat next to me, (and who seemed unconscious that I was not perfectly serious,) that, as the Club was composed chiefly of Apostles of the Newness, and as we hoped to aid in crushing some monsters, we should call ourselves (if we must be antique) the Club of Hercules. A. meanwhile, finding that his Olympian tack met with a headwind, wore ship and proposed 'Pan' as perhaps simpler and more accessible to the ordinary intellect. Hereupon, I again modestly suggested that, as we were to have a *café* annexed, or to annex ourselves to a *café*, the name Coffee-pot would be apter than Pan, unless we prefixed

thereto the distinguishing christen-name of Patty.

"E. [Emerson] has changed a good deal since his visit to England. He has become — not at all more worldly — but more of this world. The practical sense of John Bull seems to have impressed him, and he is resolved to be practical too. His lecture on England was not good, for him. There was one thing in it that especially pleased me. He did not even allude to the people. His favorite theory (you know) is the highest culture of the individual. He would think a nation well wasted if it brought one man to perfection. Accordingly his whole view was of the upper class — their beauty, their pluck, their fine persons, their healthiness, &c. The people he clearly regarded as the dung for those fine plants. I was pleased with this, because it was natural to E., and because we have enough who profess to see nothing but the people. It was wholesome to have the other side also presented. Yet the lecture, as a whole, gave me limited satisfaction and taught me nothing. E. dwells so habitually

in a world of his own that when he comes down into the real and practical (everything being strange to him), he notices *minutiæ* that would escape the habituated vision, and his remarks accordingly have wonderful freshness and point. But in going to England, which was as unfamiliar to the eyes of other travellers as to his own, he has reported things which we had already heard many times. I heard the lecture at our Cambridge Lyceum, and, as his diction was somewhat peculiar, I was much amused by watching the audience. I saw one worthy joiner repeatedly and vigorously scratching the outside of his head in the hope of exciting a corresponding vivacity within — but he at last gave it up as useless. A new edition of E.'s works is to appear with a portrait. C. [Cheney] is to draw it, which I am sorry for. His heads are always graceful and spiritual, but they are wanting in that punctilious veracity which gives to a portrait its whole worth. Yet he gives the *expression* of the person quite wonderfully. I went to his room once, some half a dozen years ago, and saw, among other heads, one of a little

Boy. After looking at it, and feeling myself drawn to it in a peculiar and inexplicable manner, I said to C., 'I never saw the original of that drawing, but I am certain from the expression of the eyes, that that boy (whoever he is) is of my kith and kin.' It turned out to be a son (whom I had never seen,) of a cousin of mine.

"L. [Longfellow] has an excellent crayon drawing of E. by a down-easter named J. [Eastman Johnson]. It is the only tolerable head of him I ever saw. I am sorry it should not be engraved. L. has also a capital head of H. [Hawthorne] by the same artist.

"In regard to the proposed collection of my poems, the case stands thus. Two of my volumes are stereotyped and I own the plates. I intend to have such parts as I care to preserve stereotyped also and add them to the smaller volume, making two good-sized ones. As for my portrait, let that come hereafter when I am older and wiser or dead."

[He soon reverts to his nursery ballads, never before printed.]

"I copy below one of my latest poems. I have attempted to complete a fine old-ballad fragment, how successfully you must judge. It has been very popular with the small public for whom it was specially intended.

"Lady Bird, lady bird, fly away home!
Your house is on fire, your children will burn!
Send for the engines, and send for the men,
Perhaps we can put it out agen;
Send for the ladders, and send for the hose,
Perhaps we can put it out, nobody knows;
Sure, nobody's case was ever sadder,
To the nursery-window clap the ladder,
If they are there, and not done brown,
They'll open the window and hopple down!

"Thus far, you perceive, the material instinct gets the upper hand, but now the Lady Bird arrives at the scene of desolation, and the house-keeping qualities of mind are electrified into morbid activity. The word 'hopple' is finely local, being in the Mab dialect. It means to scramble down confusedly.

"Splish, splash! fizz and squirt!
All my things ruined with water and dirt,
All my new carpets torn to flinders,
Trodden in with mud and cinders!

My mirrors smashed, my bedsteads racked,
My company tea-set chipped and cracked!
Save my child — my carpets and chairs,
And I'll give you leave to burn my heirs,
They are little six-legged, spotted things,
If they have any sense, they'll use their wings;
If they have any sense, they'll use their legs,
Or, at worst, it is easy to lay more eggs.

"This, you observe, teaches children not to value themselves too highly, to respect crockery and varnish, and to cultivate self-reliance."

The copious letters written by Lowell to Charles F. Briggs, and printed in full by Professor Norton, recall to me the answer of the once noted New York author, Henry T. Tuckerman, when I asked him how it was that Lowell gained applause so easily, while so many had to wait for it. The explanation is very easy, said Tuckerman, "Lowell had an admirer." This admirer was Briggs, whose preservation in the amber of the "Fable for Critics" has not sufficed to keep his memory green, and who undoubtedly left no opportunity unused to celebrate Lowell's youthful genius.

Lowell's personal popularity at this time,

though great, was not universal. He was, as Willis said, "the best-launched poet of his time," but this early success was not altogether beneficial. He was secretly over-sensitive, pensive, given to anxiety and despair, all of which is plainly visible in his letters; and yet he was sometimes charged with arrogance, or at least with being self-absorbed and monopolizing. As Sir Lucius O'Trigger says, there was "an air of success about him that was mighty provoking." The influence of his wife scarcely tempered this, for she saw always his nobler side, and met his impassioned poetry with strains as ardent. She loved him, as she wrote, —

> For that great soul whose breath so full and rare
> Doth to humanity a blessing bear,
> Flooding its dreary waste with organ tone.

That side was undoubtedly the true Lowell; yet it must be remembered that it was a time, in American literature, of defiant and vehement mutual criticism. Poe was disfiguring the press with the bitterness and scurrilous quality of his attacks; it was thought a fine thing to impale somebody, to make somebody

writhe, to get even with somebody, and it was hard for younger men to keep clear of this flattering temptation. Years before the founding of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Lowell once described to Thaxter and myself, at the Isles of Shoals, an imaginary magazine which he would like to edit: "We will have in it," he said, "a department headed by a vignette representing a broom; and in that we will in each number sweep some pretender out of existence. Then, having done it, we would stand by it, and if we had made a mistake and killed a young Keats we would never acknowledge it." This project so dwelt in his mind that he mentioned it again to Mr. Sanborn twenty years after in regard to the *Atlantic Monthly*. This method had already been illustrated by his treatment in the "Fable for Critics" of Margaret Fuller and Professor Francis Bowen; and it naturally did not soften the friends of these victims, when, on becoming himself a member of the Harvard Faculty, he struck out the references to Bowen, but left the other untouched, even after the noble Italian career and pathetic death of Madame Ossoli. Yet

much of this earlier bitterness was at the very time (1845) when he wrote to his friend Briggs, "I go out sometimes with my heart so full of yearning toward my fellows that the indifferent look with which even entire strangers pass me brings tears into my eyes." Strange that the very man who wrote thus should take pleasure in pulverizing into atoms an author so shy and secluded as Percival.

There is something curiously interesting to the student of human nature in the rapid transition, in Lowell's case, from the writer of decidedly convivial class songs to the man addressing, four years later,[1] the annual meeting of the Cambridgeport Washington Total Abstinence Society. It was about this time that his father said of him, in reference to his preferring to walk up and down the piazza during family prayers, "James is not serious, as yet, but he has a good heart, and is a foe to every mortal wrong." Ten years later yet, on my inviting him to attend the Whole World's Temperance Convention in New York, at which I was to preside, he returned the following rather guarded answer: —

[1] Lowell's "Letters," I. p. 68.

AUGUST 31, 1853.

' MY DEAR SIR, — I should not have the least notion how to address the Whole World's Convention even if I had anything to say to them. I can only declare that I sympathize heartily with any movement that shall promote temperance or shall elevate man or woman socially or morally. The *How* must be left to the care of individual experience.

Among the good things of the day, let me thank you for your pamphlet on the Woman question, which I read with great interest; and which is the most compact and telling statement of the case I have seen.

We have no intention whatever of going abroad again at present. The climate of Italy, I think, did Mrs. Lowell great good, but she is not well enough now to think of leaving home.

I am glad you liked Maria's poem. Two others of hers have been published in *Putnam*, "Necklaces," and "The Grave of Keats." They are all beautiful, *I* think, and the greatest pleasure I am capable of is to hear them appreciated. With sincere regard,

I remain yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

This was written just two months before Maria Lowell's death, and there does not exist in literature, I think, a more exquisite expression of the possible union between two thoroughly poetic natures. It was, however, a curious influence of her death that, instead of

its making him a stronger reformer in the lines into which she had guided him, the effect seemed rather to lie the other way. "The natural Tory"[1] in him, as he described an innate instinct to Hughes, in 1874, seemed to come uppermost; her death made him a recluse, and he appeared to shrink from all associations that recalled her memory too keenly. For a few years he allowed his name to remain on the list of vice-presidents of the Anti-Slavery Society, but that was all. During the long period of the fugitive slave cases, the Kansas troubles, and the John Brown excitement, I can remember nothing that seemed to identify him seriously with the party of agitation, except that once, on meeting me when I was under indictment after the Anthony Burns affair, in 1854, he put his hand on my head, and said, rather approvingly, "This is a traitor's head." Perhaps he only did it on the general principle announced by Scott in "Rob Roy," that treason has been in all ages accounted the crime of a gentleman. I have since learned from Mr. F. B. Sanborn that Lowell thought of recalling

[1] Lowell's "Letters," I. p. 136.

Hosea Biglow to the scene and of sending him to Kansas; and from the moment when he took the helm of the *Atlantic Monthly*, in 1857, he was felt to be on deck again. His early papers in that magazine helped to lead public opinion more than any others of the time, and he lavished in the cause all his treasures of wit and memory. To whom but Lowell would it have occurred to write by way of illustration, "Lord de Roos, long suspected of cheating at cards, would never have been convicted but for the resolution of an adversary, who, pinning his hand to the table with a fork, said to him, blandly, 'My lord, if the ace of spades is not under your lordship's hand, why then I beg your pardon.' It seems to us that a timely treatment of Governor Letcher in the same energetic way would have saved the disasters of Harper's Ferry and Norfolk." And he was one of the first to proclaim publicly, while Mr. Seward was still trying to keep the question of slavery wholly out of the affair: "We cannot think that the war we are entering on can end without some radical change in the system of African slavery. . . . The fiery tongues of the

batteries in Charleston harbor accomplished in one day a conversion which the constancy of Garrison and the eloquence of Phillips had failed to bring about in thirty years." Such words were half battles, at that day.

The biographers of Lowell all agree that he was a good editor. This is of course true as to taste, judgment, and a steadily widening sympathy. On the business side of editorship, however, it was a great relief when Fields took the helm; and the following two letters will indicate the point where Lowell was deficient. Theodore Parker had died on May 10, 1860, and I had taken pains to write promptly a sketch of him, based on intimate knowledge, for early publication in the *Atlantic*. Then followed a delay which I could not understand, but which the second letter explains.

CAMBRIDGE, June 28, 1860.

MY DEAR HIGGINSON, — I supposed you would understand as going without saying that I am always glad of an article from you. I can't use it however before September. I have to make it a rule not to acknowledge articles sent to me — or I should have time for nothing else. You can conceive. Celia Thaxter's poem I like and will print. I think we ought to notice Parker and

should like to have your article. I think that folks have confounded (as they commonly do) *force* with *power* in estimating him and so have overrated him.

Cordially yours,

J. R. L.

CAMBRIDGE, August 27, 1860.

MY DEAR HIGGINSON, — Your article on Parker is by this time in type for the October number. I should have printed it before had I known that it was in my possession. As ill-luck would have it, it was the bottom one of a bundle of Mss. which I was working down through with no notion that it contained anything but anonymous matter. I wondered you had not sent it, . . .

I like your Parker very much — though I question the epithet "*noble* frankness" which you apply to his treatment of the dead — who couldn't answer. But I think you have treated the subject with great judgment and discretion. Your *twenty* languages is a good many.

Cordially yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

It is a curious fact that while the delineation of Parker in the "Fable for Critics" is perhaps the best ever given, yet he and Lowell never quite sympathized. What I called "noble" frankness in Parker's series of obituary sermons, was based upon the general habit which had prevailed up to that time of making such things absolutely colorless except for flattery; so that Parker's fine address on John Quincy

Adams came as an absolute surprise, which his "Historic Americans" continued. My phrase "twenty languages" was an understatement of those in which Parker had at least dabbled. On the other hand, Parker always maintained that Lowell was not thoroughly in earnest and "had no enemies," which seemed to me equally one-sided with Lowell's criticisms upon himself.

I had always supposed that the two appointments of Lowell as foreign minister proceeded from the influence of his classmate and fellow-townsman, Charles Devens, who was a member of President Hayes's cabinet; but General Devens himself assured me, long after, that the original suggestion came from the President himself and grew out of his liking for the "Biglow Papers." Lowell wrote me on June 16, 1877, after his appointment: "I am much obliged to you for your congratulation, though I myself am very doubtful about accepting. However, Spain will be of some use to me in the way of my studies, and doubtless I shall enjoy myself when I get there." How greatly he clung to the thoughts of home, even in his English position, will be plain from the

following sweet and simple letter, written to acknowledge the report of the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the city of Cambridge which I had sent him. There is something peculiarly noteworthy in the abrupt transition from the thought of English life to that of his five grandchildren. The "meeting" to which he refers was that on the death of President Garfield.

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
LONDON, October 8, 1881.

DEAR HIGGINSON, — Thanks for your excellent address and many thanks for your friendly letter. These views out of the past grow sweeter (*not* because they are distant) as we grow older. I am glad that you are well and happy.

* * * * * *

I read every word of the 200th celebration and thought it all exceedingly well done and in good taste. I have not time to say more, for I am just starting for the Continent on a leave of absence which I sorely need. Wish me joy, I am going to Italy! Whether I may not find somebody else in my chair at the Legation when I come back is one of those problems that I cannot solve and care little about, though now that I have made friendships here I should like to stay on a little longer. Did you know that I have five grandchildren?

I shall order a copy of the proceedings of our meeting here to be sent you.

Faithfully and hastily yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

The following letter was written when I was editing "Harvard Memorial Biographies" and had asked him to write of his nephew, General Charles Russell Lowell. The latter part refers to a paper I had written for the *North American Review* on "Children's Books of the Year." Few letters, I think, were so scintillating as Lowell's; everything that he touched gave out its little electric spark.

ELMWOOD, January 10, 1866.

MY DEAR HIGGINSON, — I think the best man to write a sketch of Charley for the *Libro D'Oro* would be John Bancroft. It should be somebody that knew him from a much nearer level of age than I did. A boy don't tell his dreams to his uncle of another generation. Moreover, his father does not wish me to do it, lest it should interfere with something more at length which we propose. The obstacle has been, as you know, the paucity of letters that can properly be provided so soon. James left much ampler materials, and Child will do a portrait of him for you which will be as good as love can make it.

I am very glad you have undertaken the editorship of the volumes, because it insures a good tone. If others should fail you, I will do Charley, but for other reasons than those I mentioned I think it better not.

I read your article in the Review with much satisfaction. A light touch is so rare! I growled a little over what you say of Abbott [author of the Rollo Books], who is

my Ogre, whose business it is to eat fairy-children. I was surprised that you did not speak of Hawthorne's children-books. To me they are full of charm.

I hear you [are] to come hither a lecturing. If so, there is a bed here which will welcome you warmly.

Yours truly always,

J. R. Lowell.

He could have certainly written nothing more charming in reference to his three lost nephews than when he described, at the beginning of his essay "On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners," his walks from Elmwood to Harvard Square about 1870: "The war was ended. I might walk townward without that aching dread of bulletins that had darkened the July sunshine and twice made the scarlet leaves of October seem stained with blood. I remember with a pang half proud, half painful, how, so many years ago, I had walked over the same path and felt round my finger the soft pressure of a little hand that was one day to harden with faithful grip of sabre. On how many paths, leading to how many homes where proud memory does all she can to fill up the fireside gaps with shining shapes, must not men be walking in just such pensive moods as I? Ah, young heroes,

safe in immortal youth as those of Homer, you at least carried your ideal hence untarnished! It is locked for you beyond moth or rust in the treasure chamber of death."

In comparing Holmes and Lowell, we are at once struck by the smaller number of personal antagonisms inspired by the former; and also by a singular intellectual divergence between them. As to fertility of mind, abundance of resources, variety of knowledge, there was scarcely any difference; the head of water was the same, and why was it that in the case of Holmes the stream flowed so much more smoothly? Of the two, moreover, it was Lowell who had sedulously trained himself to be a writer; he accepted this as his sphere, while Holmes regarded literature as a mere avocation, not as his vocation; yet it was Lowell who never quite attained smoothness or finish in utterance, while Holmes easily attained it. Lowell was always liable to be entangled by his own wealth of thought; his prose and verse alike are full of involved periods, conundrums within conundrums. He begins his Moosehead journal with this abstruse and craggy sentence: "Thursday, 11th

August. — I knew as little yesterday of the interior of Maine as the least penetrating person knows of the inside of that great social millstone which, driven by the river Time, set imperatively a-going the several wheels of our individual activities." He goes on with his rich and delightful gossip, but there is never a moment when some bit of reminiscence, some good pun, some remembered phrase from Sir Thomas Browne, may not interrupt the flow of the sentence. From this Holmes is far more free; he takes almost as many and as varied flights, but his art is better. Sometimes, even in "Elsie Venner," he tires you with the details of scientific speculation; but the literary part is always well done. The defect in this direction began to show itself very early in Lowell, and I remember that when he began to write in the London *Daily News* in 1846, there was a general complaint, both at home and abroad, over the longwindedness of his prose style. This he overcame, but the tumultuous inequality lasted and was, indeed, a part of his charm. The London *Spectator* said well of him, "Mr. Lowell's forte is profusion and his foible prodigality."

It is curious that English critics, while jealously disputing Lowell's claim to rank in the highest class of poets, yet often concede to him the precise merit which does not belong to him — that of uniform and accurate execution. It may be said, on the contrary, both of his prose and verse, that his immense fertility of mind constantly led him into confused rhetoric and mixed metaphors; one bright thought or image treading on the heels of another, and either displacing or entangling it. Take, for instance, this verse from the "Ode to Happiness": —

> Wing-footed! thou abid'st with him
> Who asks it not; but he who hath
> Watched o'er the waves thy waning path,
> Shall nevermore behold returning
> Thy high-heaped canvas shoreward yearning!
> Thou first reveal'st to us thy face
> Turned o'er the shoulder's parting grace,
> A moment glimpsed, then seen no more, —
> Thou whose swift footsteps we can trace
> Away from every mortal door!

Here Happiness is first invoked as "wing-footed"; then her "path" is watched; then she has "high-heaped canvas"; then she has a "face"; then she leaves "footsteps" at every

"door." Between the land-dweller with footsteps and the sea-rover with canvas there is absolute irreconcilableness, and yet the two are interwoven through the whole verse. Such incongruities as the "drippingly hurried adieu," in "An Ember Picture," are of the same quality, and in "The Cathedral," regarded by many as his most important poem, there occurred a pun which called forth general protest. It will always remain a curious fact that Lowell, while far more regularly trained to literature than Holmes, and not surpassing him in exuberant fertility of mind, had yet far less of artistic self-control, and has left behind him much more that is ragged and imperfectly wrought out. Yet Lowell had undoubtedly the finer nature of the two, and would have recognized keenly in others the very defect he himself manifested. Possibly the solution may be in this, that indirect preparation has its merits as well as direct; and that Holmes may have learned something for literary uses in his own microscopic work and in his constant anatomical demonstrations, just as Agassiz found that his scientific skill had already made him a

good rifle-shot before he had touched the weapon.

The *Saturday Review* once pointed out as the two faults of Lowell's prose writings "an overconfident tone and a grotesqueness of illustration." It must, undoubtedly, be conceded by his admirers that, though he is never coarse, yet his taste is not always to be trusted. The *Saturday Review* quoted this sentence from his "Shakespeare Once More," "Hamlet and the Novum Organum were at the risk of teething and the measles at the same time;" and from the paper on Italy, "Milton is the only man who has got much poetry out of a cataract, and that was a cataract in his eye." Of such passages the *Saturday Review* remarked, with some reason, that they "are relics of the hobbledehoy stage of literary production," and "are serious blemishes in a style making just pretensions to maturity." Akin to this is the remark of one of Lowell's few severe critics in his own country, Professor W. C. Wilkinson, in his "A Free Lance in Life and Letters," who makes the "want of firm and harmonious tone" to be "the leading vice of his style,"

and produces many instances of this. But it is to be noticed that such defects as these grew less and less as he matured, and that his address on Democracy, for instance, is entirely free from them.

The most serious attack ever made upon the literary work of Lowell was a really able one, called "Professor Lowell as a Critic," in *Lippincott's* (June, 1871), which appeared anonymously, but was understood to have been written by Mr. John Foster Kirk — a paper which pronounces him to be "a writer whose merits are many and striking, but wholly on the surface," and which says of Lowell's admirers: "The qualities they ascribe to their idol are precisely those in which he is most deficient. He is acute, versatile, occasionally brilliant; but he is narrow, shallow, and hard, destitute of the insight, the comprehension, the sympathy, by which the true critic, the true poet, searches the domain of thought and the recesses of the mind, illumines the emotions and kindles them." It is impossible not to read between the lines of this verdict what the writer himself admits, in so many words, to

be "a sense of grievance." He permits himself to deal with Lowell as the latter himself has dealt with Petrarch, Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Percival, and Thoreau. From the point of view of strict justice, neither Lowell nor his critic can be quite vindicated; although each of these two writers is amply furnished both with knowledge and acuteness.

Mr. Lowell had won in London that cordial reception and subsequent popularity in both literary and aristocratic circles which had, indeed, been accorded in some degree to other Americans before him. This truth is sufficiently established by a slight examination of the correspondence of Ticknor or Sumner or Motley or Dana. What is most remarkable is that he combined this with diplomatic duties at a difficult time, and bore also the test of repeated invitations to pronounce his estimate, in the most public way, of the classic names of England. American genius and scholarship had received English recognition before him, but American criticism never. The Queen herself said of him when he left, that no ambassador had ever excited more in-

terest or won more general regard in England. On the other hand, Mr. Smalley tells us that "never before his time had a departing minister been honored by addresses and meetings and resolutions of great bodies of English workingmen. . . . His Americanism was the dominant passion of his life; that and not poetry nor letters nor even those friendships and affections which were to him as the air he breathed." Yet it is quite certain that this attitude was not quite understood in America, for various reasons not now worth analyzing, chief of which was the difficult position in which he was placed on account of Fenianism and from the difficulty of dealing with Irishmen who had been naturalized as Americans and then had gone back to dwell as agitators in Ireland. Even with American visitors in London he was at one time not wholly popular, though undoubtedly most of the attacks made on him were unjust and foolish. He was, for instance, censured for beginning a note to Lord Granville as "My dear Granville," the censure proceeding from those who did not know how much more

common is this familiar form of address, among social equals, in England than in America. In the same way the ordinary diplomatic courtesies such as "He was good enough to say," or "I am bound to take for granted," or, "My friend, if I may be permitted to call him so," were censured as "circumlocutionary and apologetic," and it was said that he used to talk "in a straightforward, honest, American fashion." All this class of criticism was instantly swept away by his lecture on Democracy, which at once silenced these unreasonable voices; and which must be regarded, on the whole, as his best and most characteristic prose work, — the frankest, the maturest, the clearest and simplest in literary style.

Lowell had perhaps never seemed so attractive as during the last year or two of his life, when restored again to the house where he was born. The revision of his books for a definitive edition gave him the occupation most appropriate to the old age of a literary man, who thus watches moving before his eyes from day to day, as in a magic mirror, the

joys and griefs, hopes and fears, of an honored and useful career. Softened and mellowed by time, as well as enriched by it, he was bearing bravely the trials of a hopeless disease and awaiting cheerfully the end. He was broader in experience, serener in judgment, sweeter in temper, than ever before; and was a source of happiness, rather than of care, to all around him.

I have found among my papers some hasty notes of a talk with him in this Indian summer of his life, and print them just as they stand, only wishing that there were more of them: —

"DECEMBER 28, 1888.

"Lowell looked far better and younger than last winter, and seemed bright, alert, clear-eyed and strong, though he complained of gout. He talked most agreeably about his life abroad — said that his life in England was much easier than in Spain, where the consuls were incompetent and referred all to him, so that he wrote three quarto volumes of correspondence, all unnecessary. Also his secretary knew neither Spanish nor French. He said the Spaniards were easy to get on with

after they found he would not take money and was to be regarded as a gentleman. They suspected —— of this and so did he.

"He thought Phelps could have settled the fishery question and the Sackville question — in the latter he thought Cleveland acted hastily. In England they could not understand his action, because it was not considered that disrespect to a President meant the same as to a Queen — which he (L.) had urged upon them.

"Thought Phelps far better fitted than himself, as being a business man, which he hated.

"Is revising 'Fable for Critics'; had not read it for years and did not wonder it gave dissatisfaction. Means to put a preface explaining that he did not really write it for publication, but as a *jeu d'esprit;* and sent it to Briggs, who took responsibility of publishing.

"Said that Browning had a good deal of jealousy of Tennyson, whereas Tennyson was too absorbed in himself to be jealous of Browning. B. has Jewish blood, but will not admit it. [I asked his reasons for thinking B. Jewish.] No one who has studied his face can doubt it. He used in one case a Hebrew line, then can-

celled it in a later edition. Besides, if you dine with a Jew in London, you are sure to meet Browning." [These arguments seemed to me quite insufficient.]

His death (Aug. 12, 1891) took from us a man rich beyond all other Americans in poetic impulses, in width of training, in varied experience, and in readiness of wit; sometimes entangled and hampered by his own wealth; unequal in expression, yet rising on the greatest occasions to the highest art; blossoming early, yet maturing late; with a certain indolence of temperament, yet accomplishing all the results of strenuous labor; not always judicial in criticism, especially in early years, yet steadily expanding and deepening; retaining in age the hopes and sympathies of his youth; and dying, with singular good fortune, just after he had gathered into final shape the literary harvest of his life.

INDEX

INDEX

Abbott, Jacob, 183.
Adams, C. F., 113.
Adams, Pres. J. Q., 13, 181.
Addison, Joseph, 53.
Agassiz, Prof. Louis, 17, 188.
Alcott, A. B., 55, 62, 63, 104, 167.
Aldrich, T. B., 69, 70.
Allston, Washington, 14, 15.
Appleton, Nathan, 130.
Appleton, Rev. Samuel, 10.
Appleton, T. G., 63, 88, 89.
Apthorp, W. F., 70.
Arnold, Matthew, 148.
Astor, Mrs. J. J., 93.
Austin, Mrs. Sarah, 140.

Bachi, Pietro, 17.
Baldwin, Mrs. Loammi (Nancy Williams), 75.
Balzac, Honoré de, 142.
Bancroft, George, 14, 44, 116.
Bancroft, John, 183.
Bartlett, Robert, 55, 62.
Beck, Charles, 17.
Belcher, Andrew, 19.
Bell, Dr. L. V., 113.
Biglow, Mrs., house of, 5.
Boardman, Andrew, 9.
Bowen, Prof. Francis, 44, 46, 47, 53, 174.
Brattle, Gen. William, 150.
Bremer, Fredrika, 147.
Briggs, C. F., 160, 172, 175, 195.
Brown, John, 177.
Brown, Dr. Thomas, 59.
Browne, Sir Thomas, 186.
Browning, Robert, 132, 195, 196.
Bryant, W. C., 35.
Burns, Anthony, 177.
Burroughs, Stephen, 30.
Byron, Lord, 46.

Cabot, J. E., 68.
Carey & Lea, publishers, 118.
Carlyle, Thomas, 53, 140.
Carter, Robert, 46, 47, 67, 69.
Channing, Prof. E. T., 14, 15, 44.
Channing, Prof. Edward, 15.
Channing, Rev. W. E., 116.
Channing, W. E. (of Concord), 58, 64.
Channing, W. H., 15, 57, 64, 104, 167.
Channing, Dr. Walter, 84.
Chateaubriand, Vicomte, 191.
Chatterton, Thomas, 114.
Chauncey, Pres. Charles, 7, 8, 9.
Cheever, Rev. G. B., 94, 113.
Cheney, S. W., 169, 170.
Chester, Capt. John, 20.
Child, F. J., 183.
Clarke, Rev. J. F., 57, 104.
Cleveland, Pres. Grover, 195.
Cleveland, H. R., 123.
Cogswell, J. G., 14, 27, 116, 117.
Coleridge, S. T., 38, 91, 95.
Collamer, Jacob, 161.
Cooper, J. F., 35.
Craigie, Mrs., 124, 129.

Cranch, C. P., 58, 64, 70.
Crichton, the Admirable, 155.
Curtis, G. T., 16.
Cuvier, Baron, 35.

Dana, Francis, 15.
Dana, R. H., 14, 15.
Dana, R. H., Jr., 15, 191.
Dana, Richard, 15.
Danforth, Samuel, 152.
Davis, Admiral C. H., 113.
Davy, Sir Humphry, 95.
Daye, Matthew, 6.
Daye, Stephen, 5, 6.
Devens, Gen. Charles, 181.
Devens, S. A., 76.
Dickens, Charles, 123.
Dowse, Thomas, 18.
Dunster, Pres. Henry, 5, 6.
Dwight, J. S., 57, 58, 63, 137.
Dwight, Prof. Thomas, 94, 96.

Elder, William, 67.
Eliot, Rev. John, 6.
Eliot, Rev. Richard, 7.
Emerson, R. W., 34, 53, 54, 57, 60, 62, 63, 64, 68, 70, 85, 86, 90, 91, 104, 139, 158, 166, 168, 169.
Everett, Pres. Edward, 14, 27, 44, 117, 123.
Everett, Dr. William, 17.

Fayerweather, Thomas, 150.
Felton, Prof. C. C., 44, 69, 123, 124, 128.
Fields, J. T., 69, 104, 106, 179.
Fiske, Prof. John, 70.
Flagg, Wilson, 70.
Follen, Prof. Charles, 17.
Fox, Thomas, 9.
Francis, Prof. Convers, 17.
Fuller, Margaret (Countess Ossoli), 22, 25, 26, 36, 47, 54, 55, 57, 58, 60, 119, 129, 150, 174.

Gage, Gen., 21.
Garfield, Pres. J. A., 182.
Garrison, W. L., 85, 104, 179.
Glover, Rev. Joseph, 5.
Glover, Widow, 6.
Godwin, Parke, 35, 67.
Goethe, J. W., 63, 116.
Goldsmith, Oliver, 11, 95.
Goodale, Prof. G. L., 12.
Granville, Lord, 192.
Green, Samuel, 6.
Greenwood, Isaac, 13.
Griswold, R. W., 35, 160.

Hale, Rev. Dr. E. E., 156.
Hancock, John, 20.
Hawthorne, Nathaniel, 34, 112, 113, 119, 135, 170.
Hayes, Pres. R. B., 181.
Hedge, Rev. Dr. F. H., 17, 25, 26, 54, 57, 59, 60, 63, 113.
Hedge, J. D., 23, 24.
Hedge, Prof. Levi, 14, 22, 23.
Heth, Joyce, 97.
Higginson, S. T., 153.
Higginson, T. W., 70, 76, 81, 179, 180, 182, 183.
Hildreth, Richard, 67.
Hillard, G. S., 123, 128.
Hoar, E. R., 34.
Holmes, Rev. Abiel, 15, 75.
Holmes, John, 15, 30, 166.
Holmes, Mrs. Mary Jane, 98.
Holmes, O. W., 11, 15, 21, 23, 24, 26, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38, 53, 58, 59, 63, 68, 69, 70; theory of biography, 75; letter about engagement of his parents, 75; his letter in reply, 76; childhood, 77–81; letter of thanks for a reminiscence of his father, 81; early manhood, 82–84; medical practice and professorship, 84; lecturing, 85; influence of

Emerson, 85–86; middle life, 86; success of "The Autocrat," 86–87; as a talker, 88–90; literary opinions, 90–91; characteristics, 92–93; relations to science, 94–96; heresies, 96–98; "Elsie Venner," 98; religion, 98–102; Little Boston, his favorite character, 103; clubs, 104–105; wit, 106; later life, 107–108; death, 108; 111, 114, 125, 127, 135, 136, 147, 148, 155, 158, 185, 186, 188.
Holmes, O. W., Jr., 105.
Horace, 55, 113.
Howe, Dr. S. G., 104.
Howells, W. D., 69, 70.
Hughes, Thomas, 177.
Hurlbut, W. H., afterward Hurlbert, 66.

Ingraham, J. H., 139.
Irving, Washington, 35, 117.

Jackson, Miss Harriot, 75.
Jacobs, Miss S. S., 58.
James, Henry, Sr., 70.
James, Henry, Jr., 70.
James, William, 70.
Jennison, William, 23.
Jewett, J. P., 65, 67, 68.
Johnson, Dr. Samuel, 90.
Johnson, Eastman, 170.

Keats, John, 174.
Kimball, J. W., 99.
Kirk, J. F., 190.
Kirkland, Pres. J. T., 116.
Kneeland, Dr., 23.
Kossuth, Louis, 46.

Lachapelle, Madame, 96.
Langdon, Pres. Samuel, 21.
Lathrop, G. P., 70.
Lechmere, Mrs., 151.
Lechmere, Richard, 150.
Lee, Judge Joseph, 150, 152.
Lee, Mrs., 151.
Letcher, Gov., 178.
Lindley, John, 100.
Livermore, George, 18.
Longfellow, H. W., 11, 24, 32, 33, 36, 37, 44, 65, 68, 69, 70, 86, 107; early life, 111; comparison of Bowdoin and Harvard, 111–112; plans of life, 114–115; Bowdoin professorship, 116; first visit to Europe, 116; European work, 117–118; early sketches, 118–119; marriage, 119–122; removal to Cambridge, 123; friendships, 124; Craigie House, 124–127; appearance, 128–129; second marriage, 130; "Hiawatha," 131; "Evangeline," 131; "Psalm of Life," 131–133; "Hyperion," 134; diaries, 134–135; troublesome correspondents, 136; influence upon music, 137; kind words to Poe, 137; critics, 138; translations, 140; college work irksome, 141; as a teacher, 142–143; death, 144; 147, 150, 170.
Longfellow, Mrs. H. W. (Mary S. Potter), 119, 122.
Longfellow, Mrs. H. W. (Frances M. Appleton), 130.
Longhorn, Thomas, 9.
Lowell, C. R., 159.
Lowell, Gen. C. R., Jr., 183.
Lowell, Rev. Charles, 16, 116.
Lowell, Maj. J. J., 183.
Lowell, J. R., 16, 21, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38, 44, 46, 47, 48, 51, 53, 58, 64, 65, 67, 68, 69, 70, 85, 86, 89, 90, 105, 107, 111, 112, 114, 124, 125, 127,

129, 135, 141; influence of Cambridge, 147; love of Elmwood, 148; Tory Row, 150; traditions of Elmwood, 151–153; as a boy, 154; college life, 155–158; influence of Maria White, 159; picture of daily life, 160–172; popularity, 172–173; imaginary magazine, 174; traits of character, 175; letter about Temperance Convention, 176; death of his wife, 176–177; editor *Atlantic Monthly*, 178–180; foreign minister, 181–182; his nephews, 183–184; compared with Holmes, 185–186; fertility of mind, 187–188; prose writings, 189–190; popularity in London, 191–192; later life, 193–195; death, 196.
Lowell, Mrs. J. R. (Maria White), 159, 162, 176.
Lowell, Percival, 94.
Lowell, Rev. R. T. S., 16.
Lowell, Miss Sally, 125.

Macaulay, T. B., 88.
Mackenzie, Lieut. A. S., 117.
Mather, Cotton, 4, 7.
Mather, Pres. Increase, 7.
Mather, Rev. Richard, 7.
Milton, John, 90, 189.
Mitchell, Dr. Weir, 82.
Moore, Thomas, 91.
Morse, J. T., Jr., 92, 100.
Morton, Thomas, 29.
Motley, J. L., 63, 68, 71, 83, 191.

Newell, W. W., 150.
Norton, Andrews, 14, 44, 48, 49.
Norton, Prof. C. E., 16, 28, 37, 44, 148, 160, 172.
Nuttall, Thomas, 13.

Oakes, Pres. Urian, 7.
Oliver, Mrs., 151.
Oliver, Lieut. Gov., 153.
Oliver, Lieut. Thomas, 150, 151, 152.

Page, W. H., 69.
Palfrey, Rev. J. G., 16, 44, 50.
Palfrey, Miss Sarah H., 16.
Parker, Rev. Theodore, 53, 58, 62, 63, 67, 104, 179, 180, 181.
Parsons, Charles, 77.
Parsons, T. W., 67.
Paul, Jean (see Richter).
Peirce, Benjamin, 16.
Peirce, Prof. Benjamin, 143.
Peirce, C. S., 16.
Peirce, J. M., 16.
Percival, J. G., 175, 191.
Perry, T. S., 70.
Petrarch, Francis, 191.
Phelps, E. J., 195.
Phillips, M. D., 68.
Phillips, Wendell, 104, 179.
Phillips, Willard, 44.
Pierce, Pres. Franklin, 113.
Poe, E. A., 137, 144, 173.
Pope, Alexander, 90, 91.
Popkin, Dr. J. S., 23.
Potter, Barrett, 119.
Pratt, Dexter, 126.
Pratt, Rowena, 126.
Putnam, Rev. George, 54.
Putnam, Mrs. S. R., 16.
Puttenham, George, 159.

Quincy, Edmund, 67, 104.
Quincy, Pres. Josiah, 29, 43, 157.

Read, Gen. Meredith, 132.
Richter, J. P. F., 85, 116.
Riedesel, Baroness, 149, 150.
Ripley, George, 48, 54, 57, 67, 113.
Rossetti, D. G., 132.

Rousseau, J. J., 191.
Ruggles, Mrs., 151.
Ruggles, Capt. George, 150.
Russell, Miss P., 75.

Sackville, Lord, 195.
Sales, Francis, 17, 23.
Sanborn, F. B., 156, 174, 177.
Scott, Sir Walter, 26, 35, 177.
Scott, Sir William, 45.
Scudder, H. E., 69, 70.
Sewall, Samuel, 12.
Sewell, Jonathan, 12.
Seward, W. H., 178.
Shaler, Prof. N. S., 70.
Shepard, Rev. Thomas, 3, 5, 7.
Sidney, Sir Philip, 159.
Smalley, G. A., 192.
Smith, Sydney, 105.
Smollett, Tobias, 95.
Sparks, Pres. Jared, 14, 44, 128.
Spenser, Edmund, 47, 154.
Storer, Dr. D. H., 113.
Story, Judge Joseph, 16, 44.
Story, W. W., 16, 26, 70, 154, 155.
Stowe, Rev. C. E., 90, 113.
Stowe, Mrs. H. B., 65, 66, 90.
Sumner, Charles, 104, 123, 132, 191.
Swift, Dean, 95, 166.
Swinburne, A. C., 132.

Tennyson, Lord, 132, 195.
Thaxter, Celia, 179.
Thaxter, L. L., 174.
Thayer, Nathaniel, 106.
Thoreau, H. D., 34, 58, 67, 191.
Ticknor, Prof. George, 14, 27, 117, 121, 122, 191.
Tracy, John, 78.
Trowbridge, J. T., 65.
Tuckerman, H. T., 172.
Tudor, William, 44.
Tufts, Henry, 30.

Underwood, F. H., 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 87.

Vane, Harry, 19.
Vassall family, 22, 79, 148.
Vassall, Mrs. John, 151.
Vassall, Col. Henry, 150.
Vassall, Col. John, 150, 151.
Vassall, Mrs. Penelope, 150, 151.
Voltaire, F. M. A. de, 124.

Walker, S. C., 113.
Ware family, 15.
Ware, Rev. Henry, 157.
Ware, John, 157.
Ware, William, 50.
Washington, George, 56.
Wasson, Rev. D. A., 104.
Weiss, Rev. John, 104.
Welde, Rev. Thomas, 7.
Wells, William, 150.
Wendell, Miss Sally, 75.
Wheeler, C. S., 140.
Whipple, E. P., 35.
Whittier, J. G., 67, 70, 107, 136.
Wigglesworth, Rev. Edward, 8.
Wild, Jonathan, 165.
Wilkinson, Prof. W. C., 189.
Willis, N. P., 33, 173.
Wilson, Rev. John, 19.
Winthrop, Hannah, 19.
Winthrop, Gov. John, 3, 4, 19.
Winthrop, Prof. John, 13.
Woodberry, Prof. G. E., 70.
Worcester, Dr. J. E., 51.

Young, Edward (Latin translation of "Night Thoughts"), 12.

Zola, Émile, 95.